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The History of
Nansemond County
Virginia



BY
JOS. B. DUNN

OLD DOMINION LINE

Steamships "MONROE", "PRINCESS ANNE", "JAMESTOWN"
"HAMILTON" and "JEFFERSON."

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NIGHT LINE FOR RICHMOND.

For Richmond, new steamers "BERKELEY" and "BRANDON"
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For Old Point and Hampton, steamer "Luray."

For Old Point, East, Ware, North (Matthews and Gloucester Counties) and Severn Rivers, Steamer "MOBJACK."

For Newport News and Smithfield, Steamers "HAMPTON" and "ACCOMAC."

For Nansemond River and Suffolk, Steamer "VIRGINIA DARE."

Freight received at Company's Wharf, Water Street, daily except Sunday, until 5 P. M.

Passenger Tickets sold and Staterooms reserved at Company's Office on Wharf, or at Union Ticket Office, Main and Granby Streets, Norfolk, Va.

For further information relative to Passenger or Freight Rates, apply to

JOHN NICHOL, General Agent,
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(See Daily Papers for Winter and Summer Changes in Schedule.)

ORGANIZED 1869.

THE FARMERS BANK OF NANSEMOND

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Capital	- - -	Twenty Thousand Dollars.
Surplus and Profits	-	Five Hundred and Fifty-five Thousand Dollars.
Total Resources	-	More than Two Million Dollars.

With Long Experience, Unsurpassed
Facilities and Increasing Resources, the
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SUFFOLK, VIRGINIA

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The Oldest Peanut Concern in the Town of Suffolk

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Nansemond River

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HAVING abiding faith in the future growth and developement of Eastern Virginia, and especially of the peanut belt of Nansemond County, the above business was organized, and in 1901 incorporated under the laws of the State of Virginia:

Located upon deep water, accessible to all tidewater markets, from a very small beginning the business has become one of some magnitude, its present annual output being twelve million building brick, in addition to other products. The Company is fortunate in owning what is, probably, one of the most valuable clay deposits in Eastern Virginia, it being a peninsular, several hundred acres in extent, bounded on the east by a narrow creek, south by the Nansemond River, west by the western branch of the Nansemond, and upon the north by the public highway leading from Suffolk to Smithfield. Upon this public road the Company have a handsome brick store, well stocked with goods, and also their General Manager's residence: Lying in the world's best Peanut territory, these lands have, under the intelligent culture of their General Manager, who is a stockholder in the Company, become profitable holdings, aside from their value on account of a deep and strong "brick clay" subsoil of from ten to twelve feet in depth. With a second plant nearly equipped, having sufficient capacity for fully doubling their output, unlimited raw material, the use of the most modern machinery and methods, the remarkable increase in fertility of their lands, the location of some twenty-five families of employees upon this property, and the gradual but sure increase of their merchandising business, we think the Company may reasonably look to the future with hope and confidence.

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All Grades of

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SUFFOLK, VA.

Capital	-	-	\$131,000.00
Surplus to Policy Holders	-	-	154,185.87
Total Assets	-	-	- 163,394.07

J. E. WEST, President

G. W. TRUITT, Vice-President

J. T. WITHERS, Secretary-Treas.

J. Walter Hosier

REAL ESTATE,

INVESTMENTS

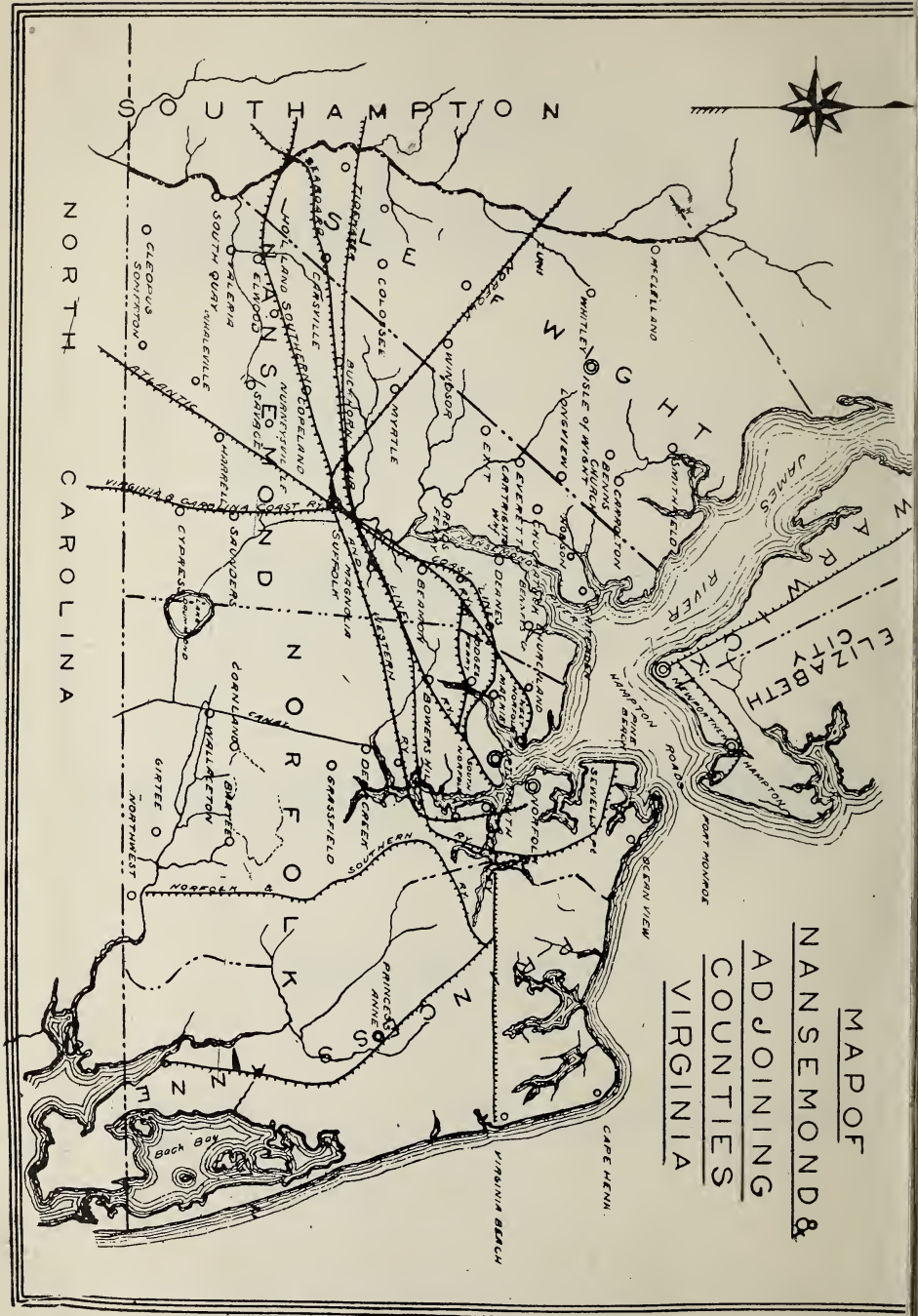
and General Insurance

Kilby Street,

SUFFOLK, - - VA.



MAP OF
NANSEMOND &
ADJOINING
COUNTIES
VIRGINIA



THE
HISTORY OF
NANSEMOND COUNTY
VIRGINIA



BY
JOS. B. DUNN

The first mention of the name Nansemond is found in Smith's History of Virginia. In the summer of 1608 Capt. John Smith with twelve companions came up the river called Nansemond after a tribe of Indians of that name. Smith and his men were attacked in the neighborhood of an island now called Dumpling Island. The



Colonel Phillip's Residence on Nansemond River

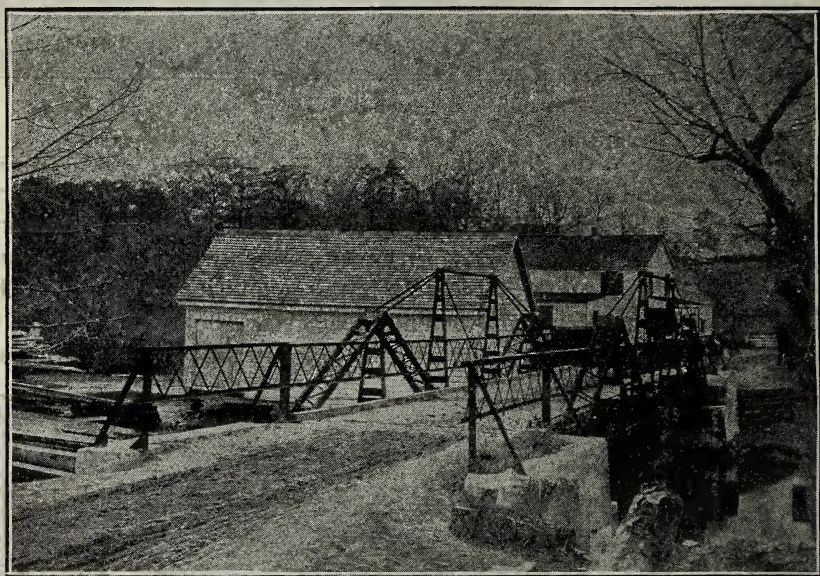
main settlement of the Nansemond tribe was near the mouth of Western Branch, and the island opposite was used as a place for storing their corn. The Nansemond tribe numbered three hundred warriors, and their canoes filled with fighting men suddenly appeared and surrounded the little craft that held Smith's exploring party. At the first volley of musketry the Indians leaped overboard and swam to shore. Smith promptly captured the canoes and was in the act of



W. J. Lee's Residence on Nansemond River

destroying them when the Indians from the banks made signs of surrender. They were glad to purchase peace at the cost of "400 baskets of full corne," which supply helped to relieve the hungry colonists at Jamestown. In 1609 when affairs were growing desperate at Jamestown and starvation threatened the destruction of the colony,

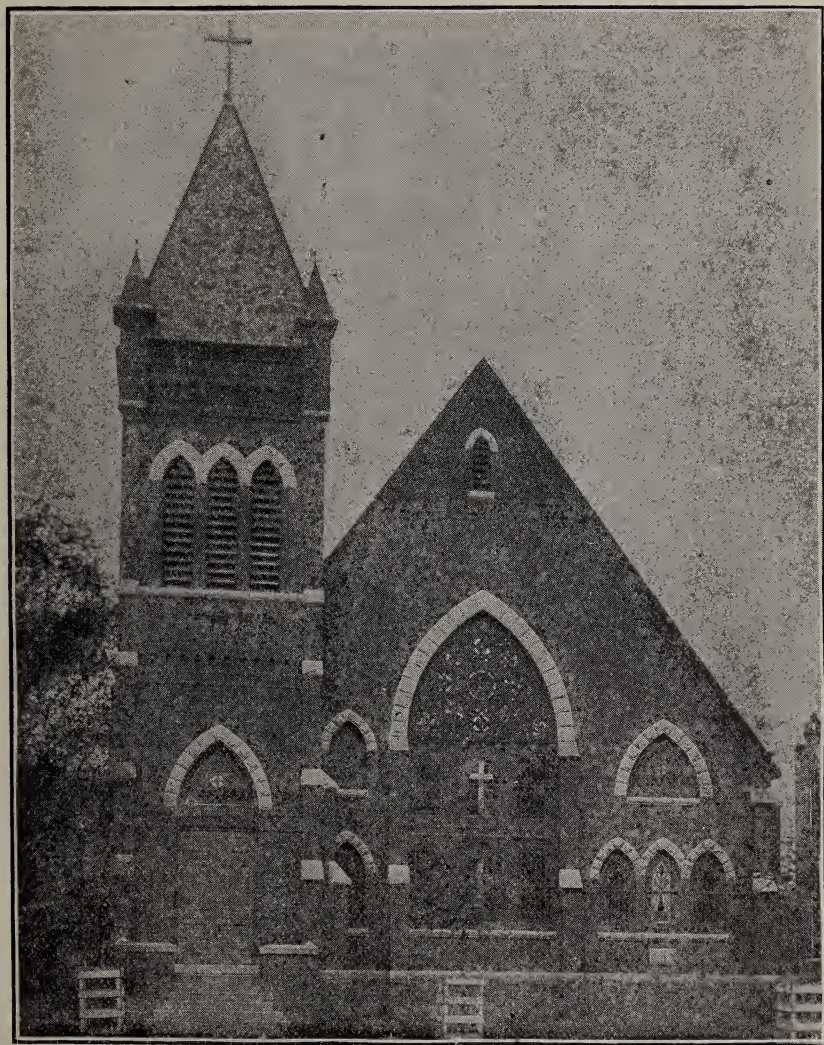
Capt. Smith remembered the river whose banks were oyster shells and in whose midst was the isle of plenty. He ordered Capt. John Martin with over a hundred men to proceed up the Nansemond river and found a permanent settlement upon its banks. Martin went in for heroic measures. He seized the Indian chief, captured the town of Nansemond, and took for the use of his men the corn on Dumping Island. Flushed with success he grew careless, and the Indians surprised him by a sudden attack, rescued their chief and carried off the thousand bushels of corn that Martin had appropriated. Martin thoroughly demoralized by the change of fortune, fled to Jamestown, leaving his men to make the best of the situation. Left with-



Iron Bridge, Everet's Va.

out a leader, the men returned to Jamestown, and Smith's plan for a city on the banks of the Nansemond was abandoned. The Indian word Nansemond means "fishing-point or angle," and was the name given by the Indians to their town which was situated in the angle made by the junction of Western Branch with the main stream of the river. The tribe takes its name from their chief settlement and the river is named for the tribe. Neither Smith nor Martin seems to have gone further up the river than the point where the stream divides. Dumping Island, probably receives its name very early, for in 1636 a grant to "a place known as Dumping Island" is made to Wm. Parker. In 1612 Sir Thomas Dale with 100 men explored the

Nansemond River to its sources. At the time of the great massacre in 1622 Edward Waters and his wife were captured by the Nanse-

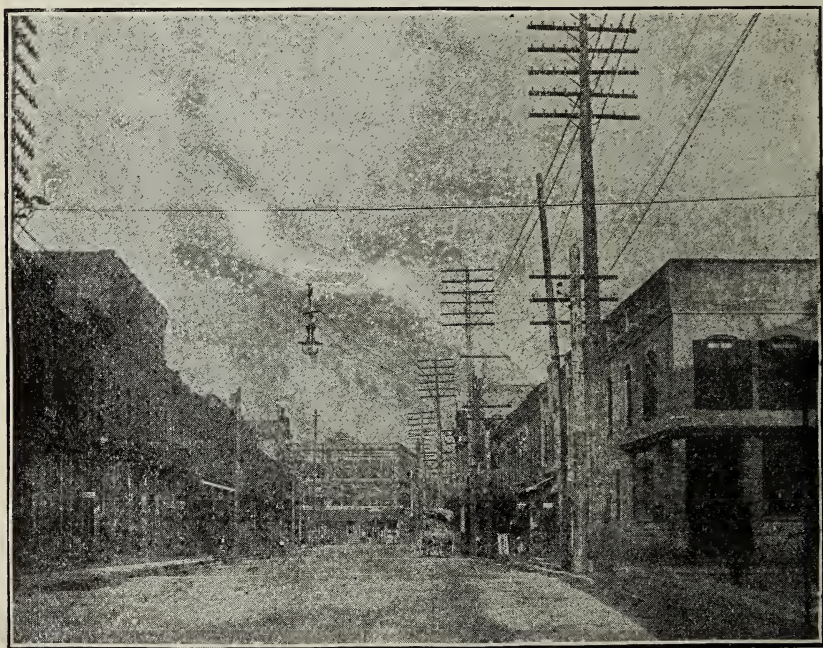


St. Paul's P. E. Church, Suffolk, Va.

mond Indians and taken to the mouth of that river, from which they seemed to have little chance of escape; but one day an empty boat belonging to some English ship happened to drift ashore, and in their rejoicings over it the Indians relaxed their guard, and Waters and his wife escaped in a canoe to Kiquotan. The great grandson of

this Waters had an only child, Sarah, who married David Meade, a distinguished citizen of Nansemond.

In 1622 in retaliation for the part the Nansemond tribe had taken in the massacre of the Colonists, Sir George Geardley devastated the country of the Nansemonds with 300 men. The massacre of 1644 was again followed by invasions of the Indian country, with such success that the power of the neighboring tribes was broken. At the session of the Assembly, 1644-5, the inhabitants of the country south of James River were ordered to make marches upon the Indians. In March 1646 war was again declared upon the Nanse-



Washington Square, Suffolk, Va.

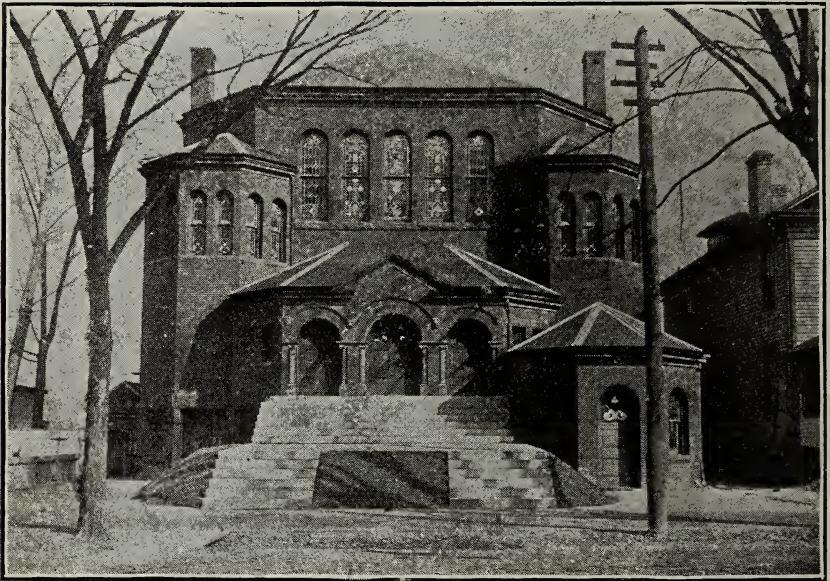
mond and adjoining tribes, but within a few months the natives had been so thoroughly subdued that in October, 1646, the Assembly repealed the acts prohibiting trade with the Indians, for cutting down their corn and for making war upon the Nansemonds.

From this time the Nansemond tribe gradually dwindled away. The tragic history of this people who gave their name to our county and river affords a sad commentary of the white civilization that crushed them. In 1669 they had only 45 fighting men left in their tribe, and in 1744 they were reduced to so small a number that they could no longer "subsist of themselves by hunting, which is their



M. E. Church, Crittenden, Va.

chief support," so they joined themselves to the Nottoway tribe. Their lands had dwindled also, for by a statute of 1744 they were allowed to sell lands consisting of 300 acres in the county of Nansemond. The statute providing for the sale of the Indian lands is interesting reading, as it furnishes testimony of the manner in which the Indians gradually lost their foothold on the soil of Virginia. "Whereas it has been represented to this General Assembly that the Indians of the two nations (Nansemond and Nottoway), are very prone to drink spirits and other strong liquors, to a very great excess, thereby giving ill-disposed and dishonest people opportunities to make very great advantages of them, by first getting them in debt

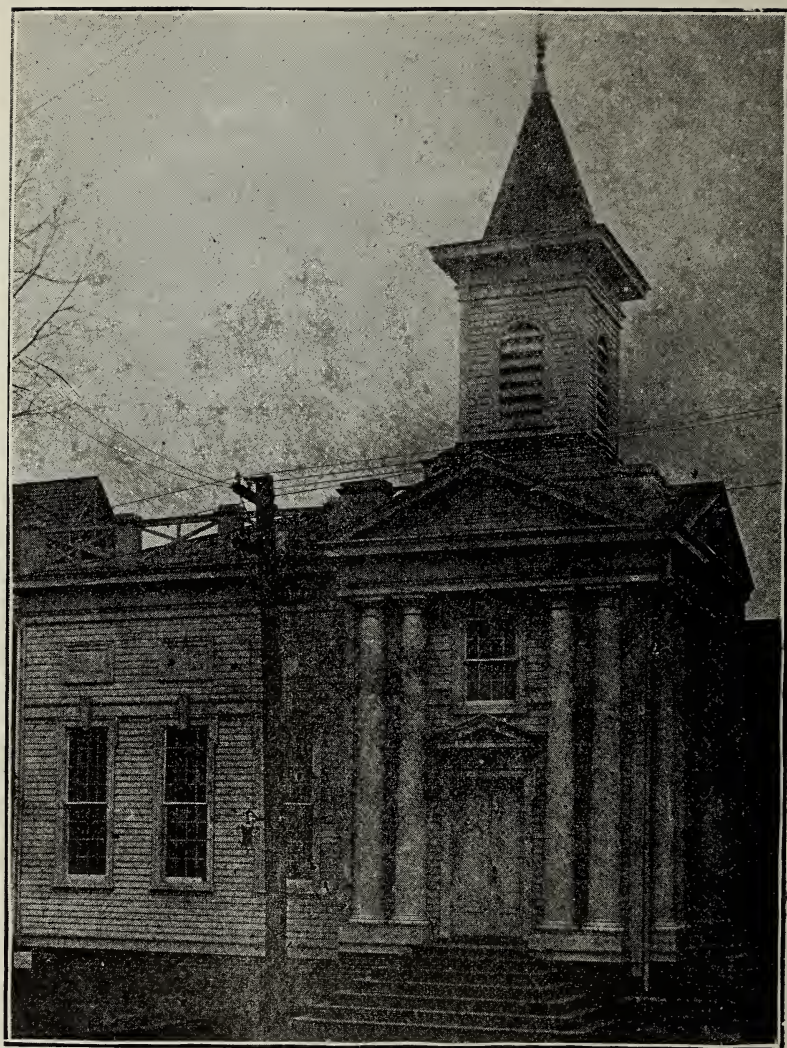


Christian Church, Suffolk, Va.

and then taking their skins, money, clothes and ammunition, by which they defeat the just trader from getting paid for furnishing them with the necessities of life; to prevent which:" Then follows a provision prohibiting the sale of liquors to these Indians for anything save ready money. But it was too late now to save the race, and in 1791 trustees are appointed to sell the last remaining lands of the tribe, and to use the money from such sale to support the survivors of the once mighty nation of the Nansemonds, who "have become so reduced in their number as not to exceed five persons, who through old age and bodily infirmities are rendered unable to support themselves." There are few traces left of the ancient occupants of the

land. A few negroes boast of Indian blood in their veins and some years ago in laying the foundation for a pavilion on a mound-shaped island in the river just below Suffolk a number of Indian relics were exhumed, showing that the place had once been the burying-ground of an Indian tribe.

As early as 1635 Nansemond attracted the attention of settlers. Here as elsewhere in Virginia the settlements clung to the water-courses. In 1635 Gov. West granted to Richard Bennett 2,000 acres on Nansemond River for importing forty persons; and to John Slaughter 200 acres on Wright's Creek. The patents to lands in the year 1638 refer to tracts situated on the Nansemond or Matrevers River. Lord Matrevers, son of the Duke of Norfolk, had received a grant in 1633 to 30,000 acres on Nansemond River and an effort was made to call the river Matravers (Matrevers) in honor of the English lord. The name did not stick, however, and appears only as an alternate form in the land patents. By 1639 the influx of population had become so large that this section was separated from Isle of Wight and set apart as a county under the name of Upper Norfolk County. Its first representatives in the House of Burgesses were Randall Crew, John Gookin and Tristram Norseworthy. A large land-owner and prominent citizen in the new county was Richard Bennett. He was a member of the Governor's council, but he was a Roundhead and gathered about him numbers of the same political and religious creed. In 1641 he sent his brother to New England to request that some Puritan ministers be sent to Virginia. These ministers gained their strongest foothold in this county where a flourishing church numbering 118 members was soon organized under the care of a minister named Harrison, who had formerly been Gov. Berkeley's chaplain. The rapid growth of the Independents disturbed the mind of the authorities and active measures were taken to suppress them. Religion and politics were practically synonymous in those days and Independence in religion spelled disloyalty in politics. England was in the midst of the fierce struggle between King and Parliament, and Virginia was loyalist to the core. In 1648, a few months before the execution of Charles I., pressure was brought to bear on the Nansemond Independents and their coreligionists in Norfolk County. William Durand of Norfolk County, who was an elder and a leader in the movement, was banished. He retired to Maryland and received a grant of 800 acres of lands for importing persons into that colony. He is frequently confused in the histories of Virginia with George Durand, who migrated from Virginia to North Carolina some years later. The Rev. Mr. Harrison, their pastor, was next expelled from the colony; next their other



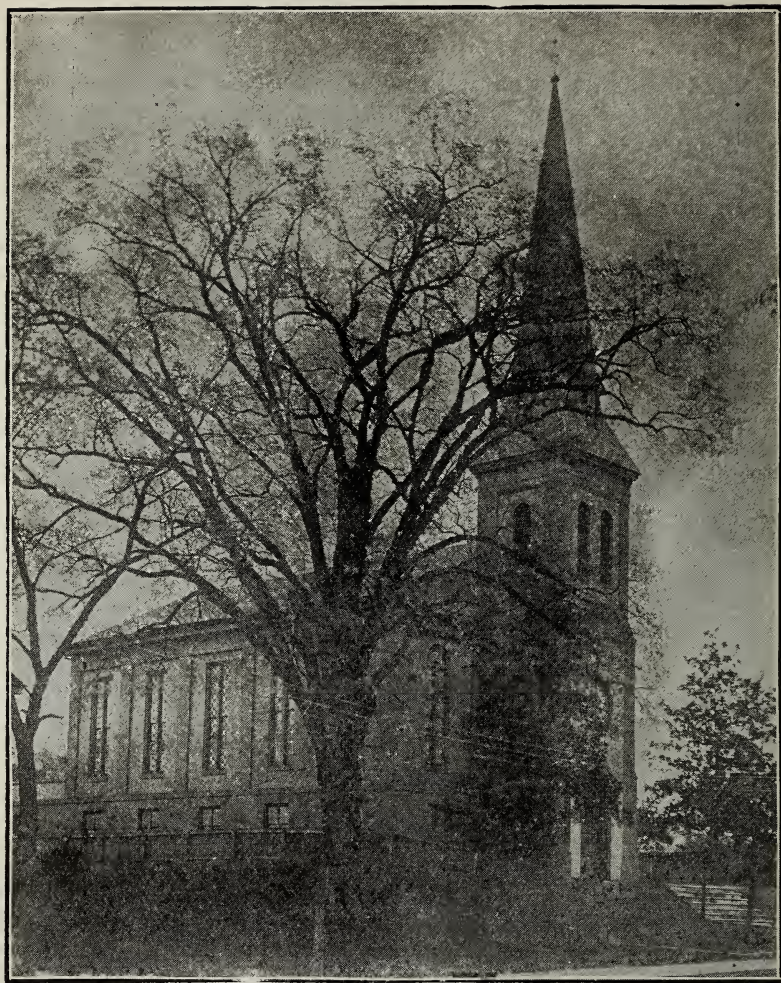
Presbyterian Church, Suffolk, Va.

teachers were banished, and when the congregation stubbornly held to the church of their choice some of them were imprisoned. So far the council had been unable to break their spirit, but an order to disarm all Independents having been given, the spirit of resistance was quenched. A number of these dissenters having been invited by Gov. Stone, Lord Baltimore's deputy, retired to Maryland, and are remembered as among the founders of Anne Arundel County in that State. Among those who left were Richard Bennett and William Ayres. These refugees prospered in their new abode and others induced by their example removed thither. It was not long, however, before they became dissatisfied with the proprietary government of Roman Catholic Maryland, and they were the leaders in the fierce war waged between Protestants and Catholics in Maryland a few years later.

In 1642 the county was divided into three parishes to be known as South, East and West. In 1646 the name of the county was changed to Nansimum. In 1652 the Commonwealth of England sent a fleet to demand Virginia's submission to the new government in England. Commissioners were appointed to receive the submission of the Colony. One of the commissioners was Richard Bennett, who had retired to England from Maryland. On the reorganization of the Colony Bennett was elected governor by the Assembly. Another citizen of Nansemond, Edward Major, was by the same Assembly elected Speaker of that body. At the second session of the House held in the same year Col. Thomas Dew, Burgess from Nansemond, was chosen Speaker.

There was a long dispute lasting from 1636 to 1772 concerning the boundaries between Nansemond and Isle of Wight counties. Four acts of Assembly during that period relate to changes in these boundaries. The act of 1674 is interesting as it mentions by name a citizen whose family since the earliest days of the colony have been prominent in the county. After establishing fixed lines of division it is provided: "Nevertheless that the house and cleared grounds of Capt. Thomas Godwin, who hath bin an ancient inhabitant of Nanzemund countie court, be, remain counted and deemed in the county of Nanzemund, anything in this act to the contrary notwithstanding."

The names of the parishes in the county as South, East and West soon gave way to other names, for in 1680 they are referred to as Upper, Lower and Chicokatuck (Chuckatuck). In 1653 Roger Green and others living on Nansemond River received a large grant of land on condition of their settling on Roanoke River and on the south side of Chowan. In the same year Col. Thomas



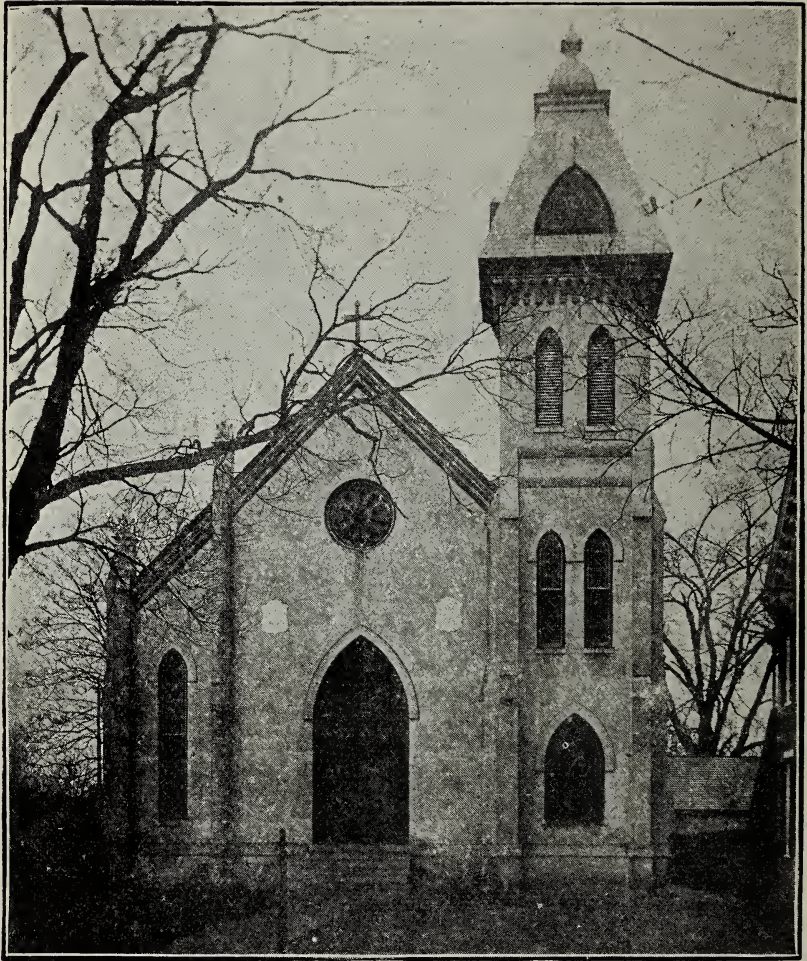
M. E. Church, Suffolk, Va.

Dew of Nansemond and others were authorized to explore the country between Cape Hatteras and Cape Fear.

The Society of Friends or Quakers was founded in 1648 by George Fox. They increased very rapidly. As early as 1656 some of this sect arrived in Boston, but were sent back to England. In 1657 laws were passed in Massachusetts to prevent the introduction of Quakers into that Colony, but they flocked thither nevertheless. Virginia also strove to keep them out of her boundaries. In the wild enthusiasm of the first years of their existence many of the Quakers were fanatics courting martyrdom. They mocked the institutions and rulers of the Colony, interrupted public worship and refused obedience to the law of the land. These fanatics gave to the Society a bad name; and beginning with the year 1660 stringent laws against them were passed by the Assembly. Captains of vessels were fined for bringing them into the Colony. All of them were to be apprehended and committed until they should give security that they would leave the Colony. If they returned they should be punished, and returning the third time should be proceeded against as felons. It was provided, however, that if the convicted Quakers should give security not to meet in unlawful assemblies, "that then and from thenceforth such persons shall be discharged from all penalties."

The Colony did not interfere with the individual's religious freedom, unless he with others combined against the laws of the land. Even when a member of the House of Burgesses was accused of being a Quaker, he was not expelled till he had refused to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Assembly, the Quakers increased and continued to hold gatherings. In 1672 George Fox, the founder of the Society, visited Virginia. In Nansemond, which had welcomed the Puritan preachers and which from 1636 had held a goodly number of dissenters, Fox found a fruitful field of labor. He had meetings "at Nansemond River, where Col. Dew of the Council and several officers and magistrates attended, and at Somerton, also at Widow Wright's in Nansemond where many magistrates, officers and high people came." The effects of Fox's labors were very marked, and a large element of the present citizens of Nansemond number Quakers among their ancestors. Two brothers of the name of Jordan became leaders in the Society of Friends and labored in England as well as in America. The Journal of one of these brothers has been published, and he speaks of a visit to his kinsfolk in Nansemond. Even the great man of the county, Richard Bennett, fell under the spell of Fox, for George Edmonson, the com-



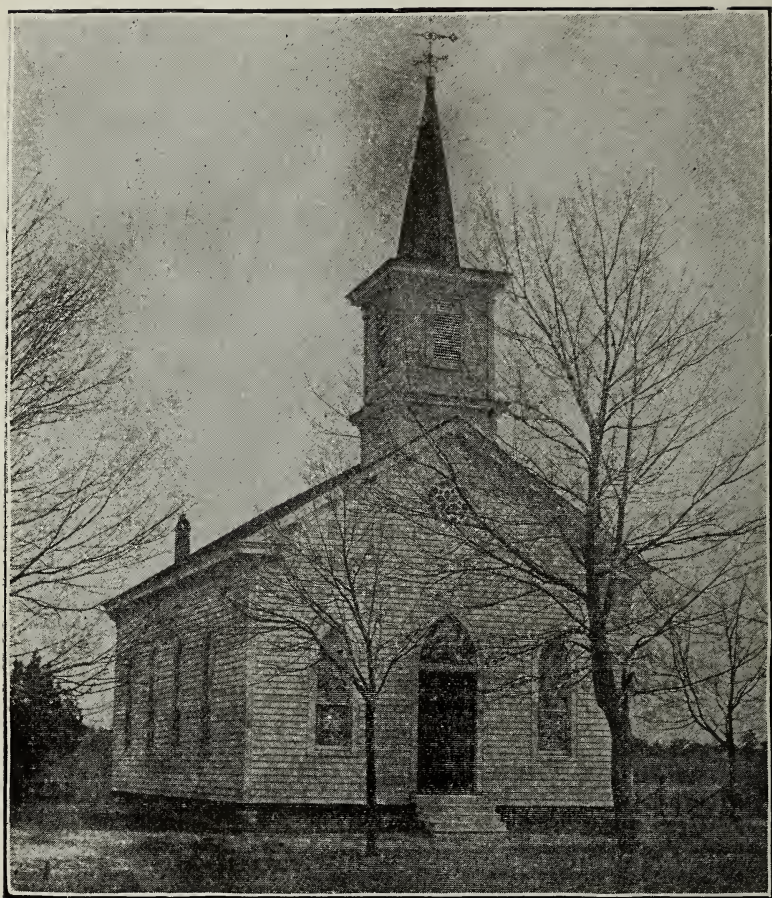
Baptist Church, Suffolk, Va.

panion of Fox, wrote of Bennett: "He was a solid, wise man, received the truth and died in the same, leaving two Friends his executors. Bennett's will dated in 1674 describing himself of Nansemond River was proved in court April 1675. He gives to the county where he lives and has long lived 300 acres of land, the rents to be received yearly by the church-wardens of the parish and disposed of towards the relief of four aged or impotent persons."

Bennett's career was a conspicuous one. He was Burgess in 1629 and in 1631; Member of the Governor's Council from 1642 to 1648. He organized the dissenters in Nansemond in 1641. Many of these dissenters were probably persons whose passage to Virginia Bennett had himself paid. In 1648 he shared the exile of his fellow-religionists in Maryland. He was the first governor of Virginia under the Commonwealth 1652-1655. He was Agent for Virginia in England in 1656. In 1658 he was again a member of the Governor's Council and continued a member of that body till his death. In 1660 he was one of the three major generals of militia. Bennett was an ancestor of General Robert E. Lee. Two other distinguished men of the county were doubtless in sympathy with Bennett's dissenting views; Edward Major and Thomas Dew, who represented the county in the Assembly. Each of them in turn occupied the Speaker's chair while Bennett was Governor. Dew seems also to have followed Bennett's lead in sympathizing with the Quakers in his later life, for we have record of his attendance upon the meetings of Fox.

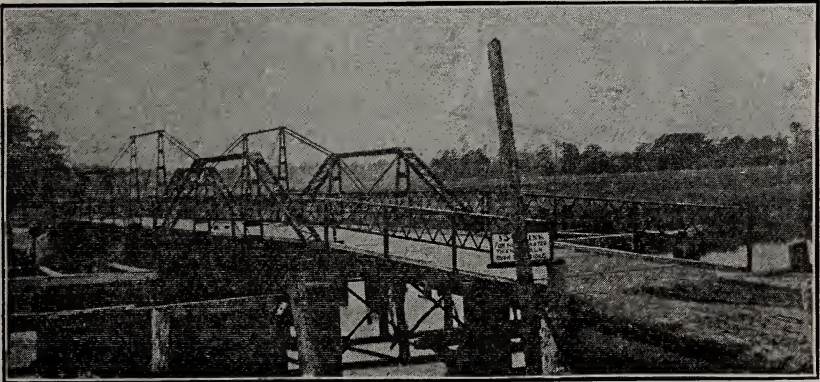
The records of the Chuckatuck meeting-house published in the Southern Historical Publications contain valuable genealogical data, and show how strong the Quaker sentiment was in the county during this period. The leading spirit among the Friends was Thomas Jordan. The sketch of him in these records is as follows: "Thomas Jordan of Chuckatuck in Nansemond Co. in Va. was born in ye year 1634 and in ye year 1660 he Received ye truth and A Bode faithfull in it, and in constant unity with ye faithfull friends thereof; and stood in opposition against all wrong and Desatefull spirits, having suffered ye spoiling of his goods and ye imprisionment of his Body for for ye truth's sake, and continued in ye truth unto the End of his dayes."

The Quakers were very strict in their discipline. There is repeated record of disputes about lands and personal property being settled by the Friends in meeting. Contested wills were also referred to the Society for settlement. There is mention in a single line of a father publicly in meeting disowning his son for having married outside of the Society. Fuller mention is made of the fact that



M. E. Church, Whaleville, Va.

Daniel Saubourn on behalf of men's meeting in Chuckatuck signed on "the eighth day of the 3d mth in the year 1701 a certificate of disownment against Tho' Duke of Nansemond County for marring of one that was not of us and likewise going to the hireling priest." The records show that in 1682 both Thomas and Edmund Godwin were members of the Chuckatuck meeting-house. The Quakers increased very rapidly in spite of the laws against them and they seem to have been unmolested, except those who like Thomas Jordan refused to pay their tithes, defied the court and maligned the clergy. Besides the meeting-house at Chuckatuck, there was one at Somerton and one in Suffolk parish built "by the high-way side." The Godwins seem to have severed their connection with the Quakers, for after 1682 both Thomas and Edmund Godwin were vestrymen of Chuckatuck parish and both filled the office of sheriff. Col. Thomas Godwin Sr. was a burgess from 1654 to 1658. His son of the same name died in 1714. As the two bore the same name,

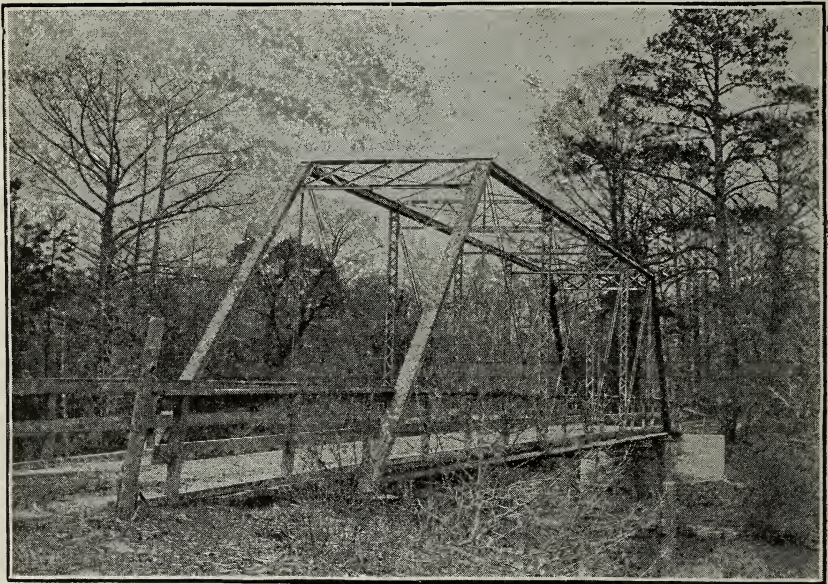


Iron Bridge, Reed's Ferry

and both filled conspicuous offices in the county and Colony it is often impossible to determine which Thomas Godwin is meant. The change of the county line in deference to Thomas Godwin in 1674 doubtless refers to the elder Godwin. The probability is that it was he who was Speaker of the Assembly in 1676. His son Thomas was a member of the defiant vestry in Chuckatuck that denied the Governor's right of induction. He was also Colonel commandant of militia and was removed by Gov. Nicholson in 1705. At the time of his death in 1714 he was presiding justice of the county court. Thomas Godwin, the third, was member of the House of Burgesses in 1714 and in 1723, and sheriff in 1731, 1732 and in 1734.

Another distinguished man of this period was Col. Thomas Milner. In 1680 he was appointed surveyor of Nansemond, Norfolk and Princess Anne counties. About 1690 he made at the request of the Governor a survey of the boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina. For this service he received fifty pounds. He was Lt. Colonel of Militia and a member of the County Court. He was clerk of the House of Burgesses but was turned out of office by the Governor in 1685. He was afterwards elected a member of the House and was Speaker from 1691 to 1693.

In 1703 Gov. Nicholson, whose tyrannical behavior involved him in so many quarrels with the Colonists, incurred the hatred of the citizens of Nansemond by his interference in county affairs.

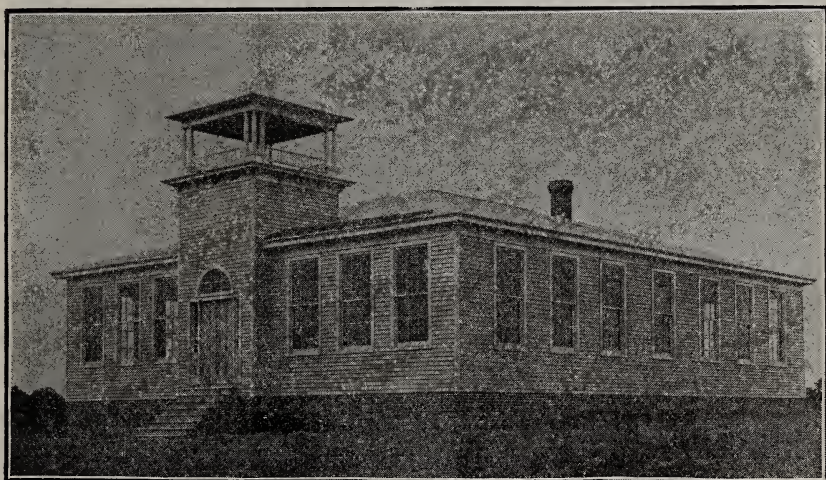


Iron Bridge, Exit

According to the statement of Commissary Blair the trouble began with Nicholson's turning out of office the efficient Clerk of the Court, Daniel Sullivan. Sullivan had voted and worked for the election of Capt. Thomas Swann to the House of Burgesses. The Governor was bitterly hostile to Swann and in revenge for Sullivan's espousal of Swann's cause, deprived that gentleman of his office, and appointed in his stead a man whom the court deemed wholly incompetent. The appointment was made by the Governor without consultation with his Council, and the court refused to accept the new appointee. The Governor again without consulting the Council immediately turned

six of the eight justices out of office and appointed a new court of incompetent men. This court and the new clerk managed the affairs of the county so miserably that there was a general outcry. Nicholson's behavior in this matter was the ground of one of the charges brought against him by Blair and helped to bring about his removal from office.

According to the theory of the Governors of Virginia they were the representatives of the King and hence patrons of all the livings in the Colony. The patent which gave to the Bishop of London the spiritual oversight of the Church in Virginia had left the right



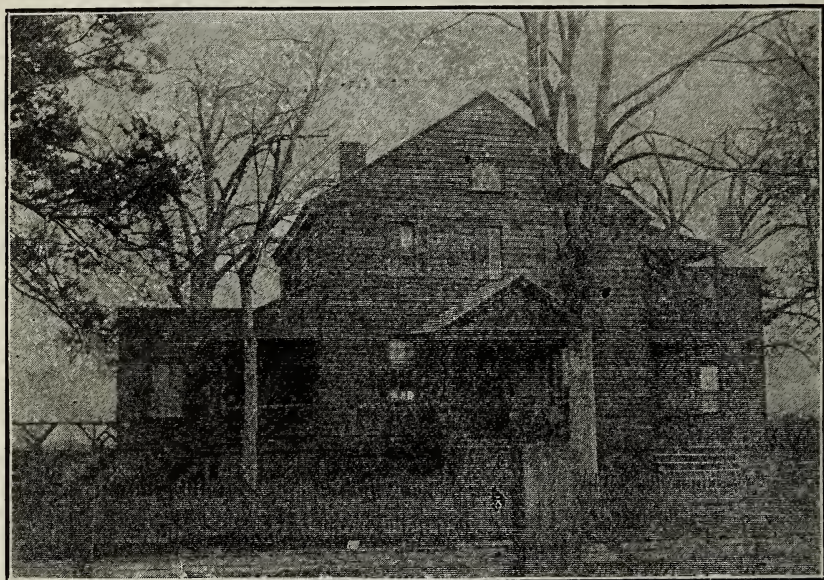
Public School Building, Crittenden, Va.

of induction to the livings with the governors. If to this conceded right of induction, the Vestries had granted the justice of the Governor's claim of authority to present to the livings, then the Governor would have been enabled to impose upon the people any ministers whatever. The people maintained that they and not the King or his representatives were the patrons of the livings, and that the Vestry as the representative of the people could alone present to a living. It is often said that most of the leading Virginians in the Revolutionary period got their training for public life in the parish vestry meeting. Certain it is that Gov. Nicholson met with a distinct defiance from one vestry in Nansemond.

The opinion of Sir Edward Northy, the King's attorney, upholding the Governor's prerogative, was sent to all the vestries and ordered to be recorded in the vestry-books. The Vestry of Chucka-

tuck parish obeyed the Governor's order and placed the document on record, but added this spirited resolution to it:

"But as to presenting our present or any other minister for induction are not of opinion (record here is unintelligible) but are willing to entertain our present minister upon the usual terms, as formerly hath been used in this Colony."



Geo. B. Robertson's Residence, Whaleyville, Va.

A leading member of that Vestry was Capt. Thomas Swann, and it would be interesting to know whether his action in this matter was the ground of the Governor's hostility to him.

In 1728 Commissioners were appointed to determine the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina. Col. William Byrd has left a description of the running of the dividing line in the Westover Manuscripts. He tells of his visit to the home of Col. Andrew Meade near the headwaters of Nansemond River. We have a vivid picture of the prodigal hospitality of those days. Col. Byrd says that on leaving, his host insisted on sending with him a cart-load of provisions to eat and drink. Byrd says that on the journey through the county "we passed no less than two Quaker meeting-houses. That persuasion prevails much in the lower end of Nansemond county, for want of ministers to pilot the people a decenter way to heaven. The ill reputation of the tobacco in these lower parishes

makes the clergy unwilling to accept of them except such whose abilities are as mean as their pay."

In 1734 the house of Christopher Jackson, clerk of the County of Nansemond, was destroyed by fire and the greater part of the county records were burned. Several acts of Assembly were passed in this and succeeding years for the relief of persons the titles to whose property were rendered insecure by the loss of the records.

Some time previous to the year 1731 Chuckatuck parish and Lower parish were combined into one parish and called Suffolk parish. There is no record of the time when such change was made,



Public School Building, Holland, Va.

but reference is made to it in the will of John Yeates dated September, 1731. This will is a lengthy and curious document. He makes provision for the maintenance of two schools built by him, and for the pay of the teachers. He gives to the church a communion service, pulpit cloth and cushion, a great Bible and some theological works. He bequeaths to "my friends, the gentlemen of the Vestry living this side of the river a treat at my house." He gives to "my worthy friends, the worshipful court of Nansemond, ten shillings to drink for my sake." He is evidently still disgruntled over the combining of the two parishes for he goes out of his way to take a fling

In 1742 an act of Assembly was passed for erecting a town at Constance's Warehouse in the County of Nansemond. The pre-

amble to this act shows that the drift of population had turned strongly towards the head waters of the Nansemond. At first the settlements had been mainly on the lower Nansemond and on Western Branch.

"Inasmuch as it hath been represented unto this General Assembly that great numbers of people have lately settled themselves at and near a place called Constance's Warehouse on the east side of Nansemond River in the County of Nansemond where the public warehouses are built; which place is healthful, commodious and convenient for traders to cohabit in, and bring their goods to. And



Main Street, Holland, Va.

that in case a town was laid out there trade and navigation would be greatly encouraged and increased."

Fifty acres of lands belonging to Jethro Sumner (being a part of the estate of the late Daniel Sullivan, Clerk of the County, which land had come to Sumner through his wife, Margaret Sullivan.) were bought and laid off by the County Surveyor, John Milner. Trustees of the new town were appointed. They were Lemuel Rid-dick, Wm. Baker, Wm. Wright, Edward Wright, John Gregory and Edward Norfleet. The land was purchased for three pounds an acre. The town was called Suffolk, though it was not in Suffolk parish, the name of the parish antedating that of the town by many

years. A reminder of the ancient name of the settlement remains in the tract of land adjoining the town cemetery, which is still called Constantia, and the house on the place is now used by the town as a home for indigent negroes.

We have now reached a period of the county's history where for the first time records within the county itself are available for information. The records are copies of the old vestry books of Upper Parish of Nansemond, and Suffolk Parish. The vestry book of Upper Parish commences in 1744, and that of Suffolk Parish in 1749. So far as is known, these volumes are the only records

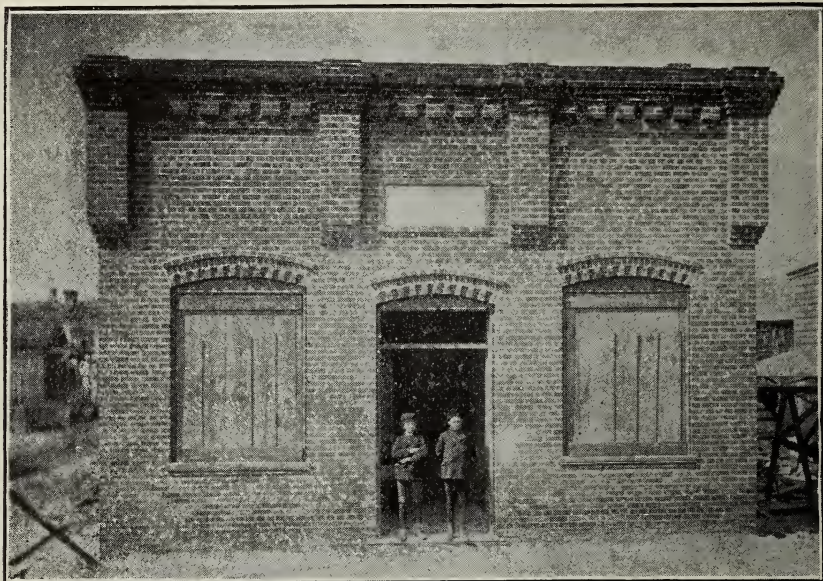


Hotel at Whaleyville, Va.

owned by the county of events antedating the destruction of the county records in 1866.

These old records present a picture of the life and habits of the people of Nansemond in early days, which, though fragmentary, is still full of interest. Until the Revolution, the Church of England was the established church of Virginia. The clergy were inducted into office by the Governors and the church was supported like any other institution of government by taxes paid by the people. The authority to present a clergyman was held by a vestry of twelve men, who were elected by the people. The vestry were generally the most conspicuous and influential members of the community. Their duties were not merely ecclesiastical, for to them was in-

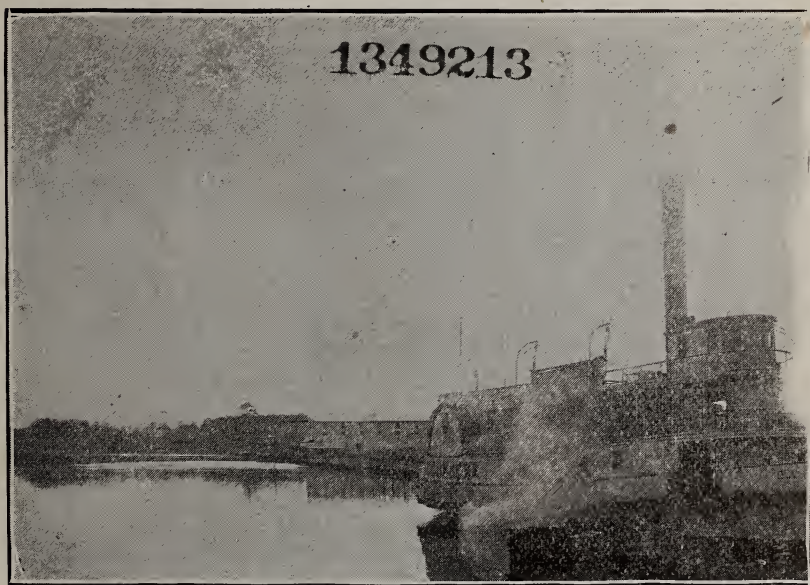
trusted the care and support of the poor of the parish and the holding of all trust funds for such purposes. They appointed the procession masters, and to them the reports of all processionings were made. They fixed the rate of taxation for tithes and to them all tithes were paid. The study of these old vestry books makes plain the fact that the people of Virginia identified themselves with the church just as they identified themselves with the government. They were the church just as they were the state. The parson was their duly appointed minister, whose duties were well marked out and whose authority was carefully defined. The vestries made



Bank at Whaleyville, Whaleyville, Va.

earnest efforts that the parish be always supplied with a minister, but every church and chapel was provided with a salaried clerk, who read the services regularly; and the lack of a minister did not prevent the congregations from attending services. Wherever a sufficient number of citizens settled in the county a chapel was immediately erected and a clerk appointed. The people were the church, and the vestry the duly elected representatives of the people. The taxes for maintaining the church establishment were called tithes. Every male inhabitant over sixteen years of age was a tithable and must pay his part towards the support of the church. The rate of taxation for tithes from 1750 to 1800 varies from 28 to 60 pounds of tobacco per poll; but as the records show that Nansemond to-

bacco brought only from $1\frac{1}{3}$ to 2 pence a pound, the tax would never have been very onerous. Tobacco was the common currency, and the minister's salary was 16,000 pounds to tobacco yearly. The clerk of the chapel received 1,000 pounds, and in one case during a long vacancy in the ministry of the parish the salary of the clerk in the parish church was raised to 2,000 pounds. The number of tithables in Upper Parish in 1744 was 1,139. There was a church at Chuckatuck, in early days, near the present site of St. John's, but this church was pulled down and the present one erected in 1755. The old Glebe Church, or Bennett's Creek Church, as it is called in

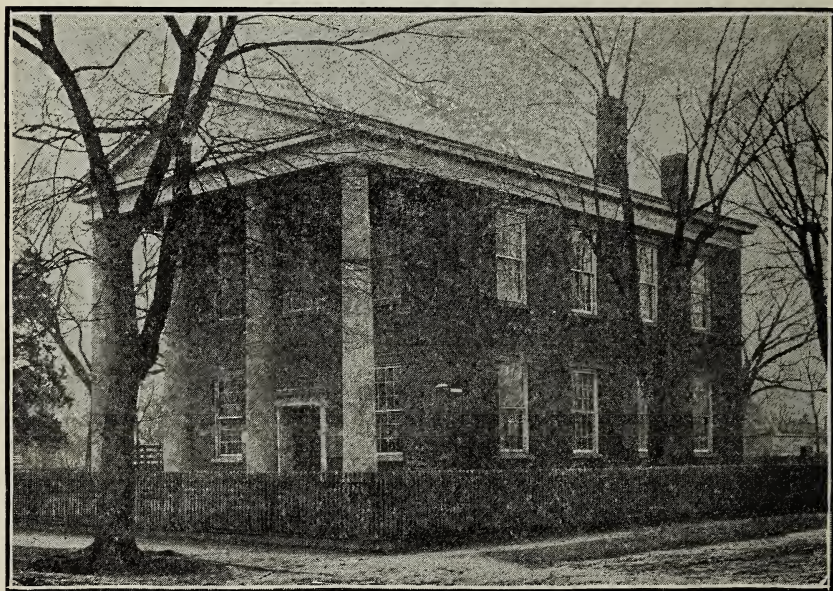


Boat Landing, Suffolk Wharf

the records, was erected in 1738. These two seem to have been the only churches in Suffolk Parish. The lands along the river and western branch were the first portions of the county settled, but after 1700 the upper portion of the county received a large influx of population. Upper Parish outgrew the other parishes, and Lower Parish and Chuckatuck were combined to form Suffolk Parish about 1725. Even after this combination, Upper Parish held the majority of inhabitants, and in 1744 a part of it was added to Suffolk Parish. The first church in Upper Parish was commonly known as the Old Brick Church. In 1748 this church was abandoned as being unsafe.

The site of this church is unknown. After the founding of Suffolk in 1742, the town church became the parish church, but there were several chapels with organized congregations that were served by the minister. These chapels were at Somerton, Cypress, Holy Neck and Nottoway. When the boundary between Nansemond and Southampton was changed in 1785, Nottoway was put in Southampton.

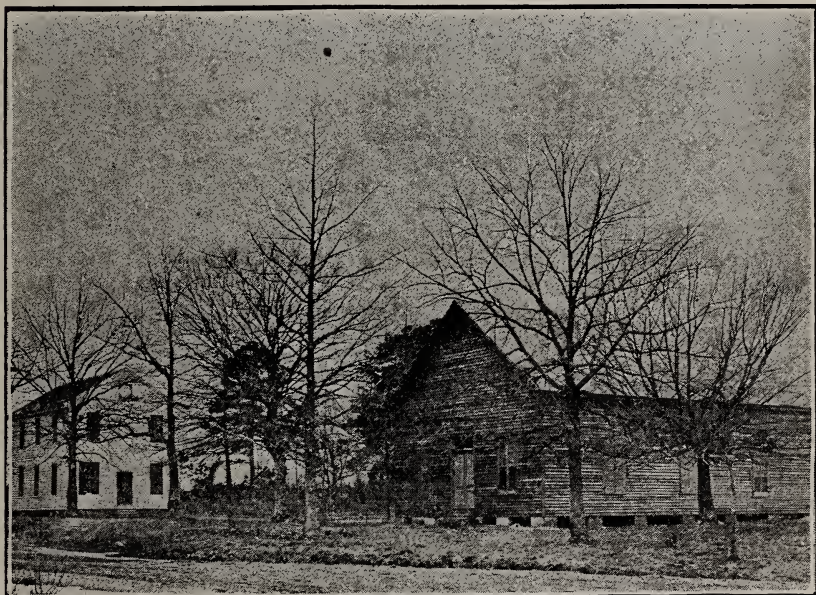
The old vestry books furnish valuable information as to the ancient citizens of the county. The reports of the procession masters give the names of most of the freeholders in the county. Some of the items entered upon the records provoke a smile. The order for the payment of 500 pounds of tobacco to the doctor for "savelating



Court House, Suffolk, Va.

Mary Brinkley and keeping her savevated" is not the record of persecution, but of kindly care for one of the parish poor. In 1755 the Assembly passed a law that every person receiving aid from the parish should, upon the shoulder of the right sleeve, in an open and visible manner, wear a badge with the name of the parish cut either in blue, red or green cloth; and if any poor person should neglect or refuse to wear such badge, his or her allowance should be withdrawn, or the offender whipped not exceeding five lashes for each offence. This law seems to have been a dead letter in most parishes,

but it was enforced in Suffolk Parish, at least to the extent of providing the badges and making the allowance to the poor conditional on their wearing the badge. The provision in Yeates' will "for a treat at my house to my friends, the gentlemen of the vestry," was not a jest, but a recognition of the convivial habits of these gentlemen; for we read in the list of parish expenses an order for the payment "to Wm. Johns for the trouble of his house and liquor 200 pounds of tobacco." Men kept open house in those days, and the decanter stood invitingly in the open. Men were free-livers and no criticism attached to a man who drank in his home or in the house



Masonic and Town Hall, Chuckatuck, Va.

of a friend. The minister no less than the laity took his glass, and did not violate convention. The salary of the parson was fixed by law at 16,000 pounds of tobacco. In Nansemond this meant a scant living, as the land was not adapted to the cultivation of tobacco, and the tobacco here was proverbially poor stuff. The vestries never took this fact into consideration, and held to the letter of the law. But few ministers were willing to undertake the task of living on from £50 to £80 a year, and of those who came some were men who were unable to get a parish elsewhere. The result was disastrous in several instances. In Upper Parish, two parsons, Balfour and Lunan, were arraigned by the vestry for being too much addicted

to drink, and in Suffolk Parish the minister for many years was Parson Agnew, an irascible old gentleman who was continually at odds with the vestry and people. With these exceptions, however, the ministers seem to have been above reproach, and in one case the vestry puts on record its high appreciation of the character and services of its minister, the Rev. Henry John Burges.

The local institutions of the Colonial period present a striking contrast to our times, not only in ecclesiastical but in civil life. The county court consisted of eight justices of the peace, appointed by the Governor in Council. The office of a justice was one of dis-



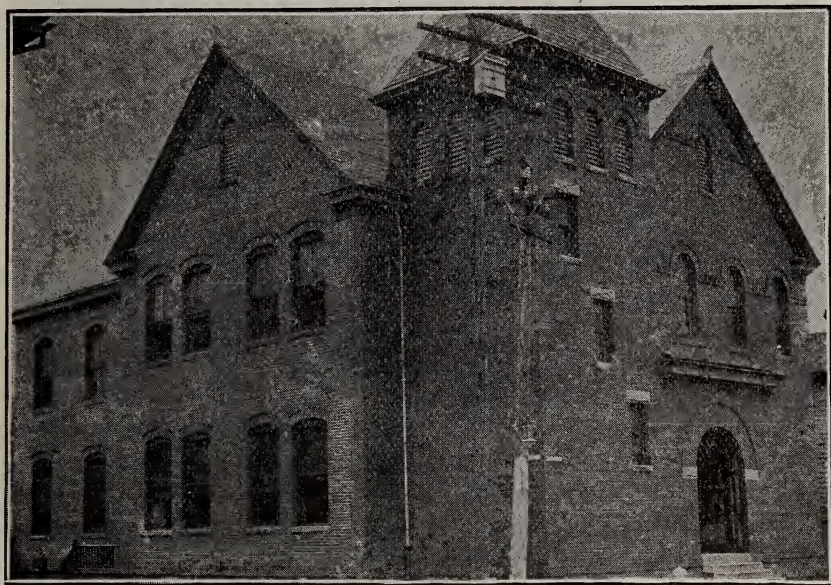
Christian Church, Holland, Va.

tion, for the court was to consist "of eight of the most able, honest and judicious persons in the county." The office of sheriff devolved upon the eldest justice, but could only be held for one year, and passed in rotation to the other justices. No justice to whom the office of sheriff had come in due course was allowed to refuse it, a heavy fine being the punishment for such refusal. The county clerk was also appointed by the Governor in council. A special act provided for the punishment of a justice who should be "overtaken of drink on court day."

As late as 1705 the county courts were compelled to provide at every court house, stocks, pillory and a ducking stool. The act providing for the ducking stool has a plaintive tone: "Whereas

oftentimes many brabbling women often slander and scandalize their neighbors, for which their poor husbands are often brought into chargeable and vexatious suites and cast in great damages. Be it enacted that in actions of slander occasioned by the wife as aforesaid, after judgment passed for the damages, the woman shall be punished by ducking."

In the first days of the colony every man "fitting to bear arms" was compelled by law to bring his gun with him to church. This law gradually became a dead letter, as the Indians were driven out. The Nansemond and Nottoway tribes remained and were a con-



Public School Building, Suffolk, Va.

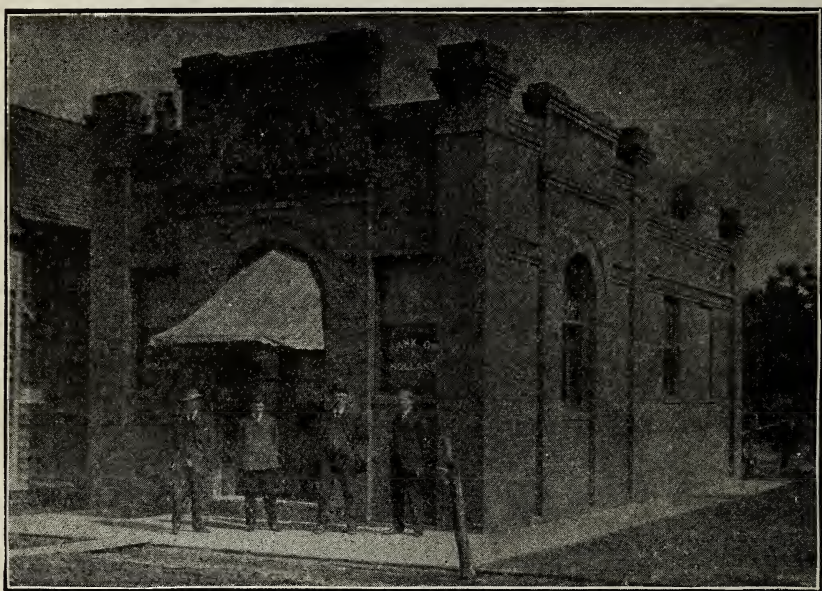
tinual menace to the inhabitants of Nansemond, and the custom of going to church armed obtained in this county long after it was abandoned by the other communities along the seaboard.

The vestry records state explicitly that the county court house was in Upper Parish even before the building of Suffolk, and the reports of the procession masters indicate that it was situated a few miles east of Suffolk.

In 1763 George Washington visited the county and explored the Dismal Swamp in the capacity of a prospector or engineer. In his diary for October of that year he gives a brief account of his experiences.

In 1767 Washington, together with Fielding Lewis and

Thomas Walker, obtained a grant of land in the swamp. The record of the grant in the land office is as follows: "Sept. 10th, 1707. In the great Dismal Swamp. Beginning at a corner tree of George Walker and Davis Meades' land, 50 acres, part thereof formally granted to John Cole, April 25th 1695, and 188 acres as the residue never before granted." Washington was a stockholder in the Dismal Swamp Land Co., whose property was largely in the county of Nansemond. Two canals were dug by this company; one of them, five miles long, bears the name of Washington; and the other, Jeri-



Bank of Holland, Holland, Va.

cho canal, derives its name from the name of the estate through which it passes near its former junction with the Nansemond river.

When the trouble with Great Britain began, Nansemond promptly organized its Committee of Safety, and this committee was very active in the cause of the colony. Parson Agnew, the minister of Suffolk Parish, was a zealous supporter of the British cause, and bitter in his condemnation of the growing spirit of independence. In the spring of 1775 Parson Agnew was observed to visit actively among his congregation, urging them to full attendance on a certain Sunday. The ladies especially were invited. On the appointed Sunday the church was filled with women, while a crowd of men numbering five hundred stood outside and listened through

the windows. Parson Agnew read the prayer for the King and no word of disapproval was heard. He chose for his text, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." His hearers pricked up their ears, for they knew what was coming. He began to decry the heinous sin of disloyalty to government. Suddenly Mr. Wm. Cowper, a vestryman and magistrate, left his seat in the magistrate's pew and, mounting the steps of the pulpit ordered the speaker to come down. "I am doing my Master's business," said the parson. "Which master?" replied Cowper; "your Master in heaven or your master over the seas? You must leave this church or I will use force." "I will never be the cause of breeding riot in my Master's house," said the minister. Parson Agnew then came down from the pulpit and walked down the aisle and through the crowd at the church door, which parted to make him a passage. He entered his carriage and drove away. The congregation quietly dispersed, and Parson Agnew never again entered the church where he had preached for so many years.

This ejection of the minister by his own congregation caused a great deal of talk in the county and throughout the colony. In some quarters the people were much criticised for their action. The parson, though driven from his pulpit, continued his activity against what he considered the spirit of disloyalty. He was warned repeatedly by the Committee of Safety, but he persisted. The matter grew so grave that the committee finally, through its secretary, Mr. John Gregorie, sent to the Virginia Gazette a recital of the charges against Agnew.

(Virginia Gazette, April 8th, 1775.)

CHARGES AGAINST PARSON AGNEW.

"He asserted that it was no hardship to be carried beyond sea for crimes committed here. He declared when speaking of the Congress that all such combinations and associations were detestable; that the Congress did not know what they were about; that the designs of the great men were to ruin the poor people and that after a while they would forsake them and lay the whole blame on their shoulders, and by this means make them slaves. He likewise informed Mr. Smith there was an association of the other party up the county and the people were signing it fast, that they had discovered their error in signing the present one. Upon the whole the public will plainly discover the principles this Rev. Gentleman entertains and in what light he views the general resolutions adopted and entered into for our relief from the oppressive hand of power. Had this zealous advocate for despotic rule been as assiduous in the

discharge of the several duties of his function as he has been industrious in propagating false and erroneous principles, not only in private discourse, but in blending detestable tenets in his angry orations from the pulpit in order to gain a party in opposition to the common cause and thereby lending his aid to reduce the very people that gave him bread to a state of wretchedness, this committee had not been at the trouble to examine the 11th article of the association and opening his conduct to the censure of the world."

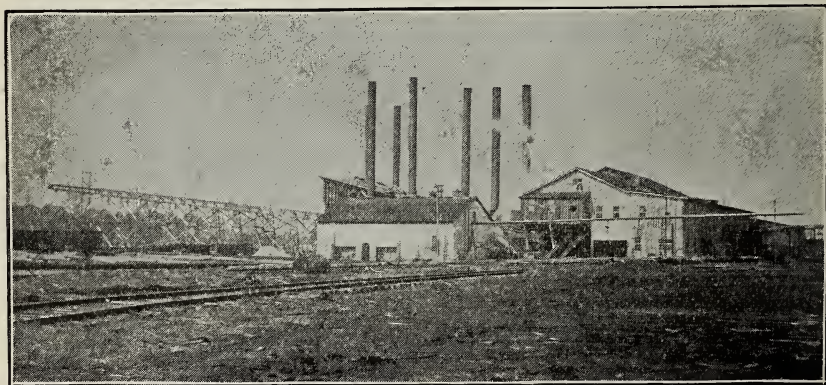
(Signed)

JOHN GREGORIE. (C. C.)

In the journal of the Committee of Safety of the colony there is this entry:

"Williamsburg, April 9th, 1776.

"The proceedings and sentence of the court of commissioners for Nansemond county, respecting the conduct of Rev. John Agnew and the said Agnew's appeal from the said sentence were laid before the committee. Resolved, that this committee hear the said



Jackson Bros. Co.'s Mill, Whaleyville, Va.

appeal tomorrow, and Mr. Agnew have notice to attend." The minutes of the committee from this point to April 29th, 1776, are missing, so that we have no knowledge of the result of the appeal. Agnew left the county some time during this year and became chaplain of the Queen's Rangers, a British troop. He was taken prisoner, along with his son, Stair Agnew, during the Revolution and carried to France.

In the Virginia Convention of 1776, which gave to the new state its first constitution, which was at the same time the first written constitution of a free state in history, and which put forth Geo. Mason's Bill of Rights, the county was represented by Col.

Willis Riddick, who was commandant of the county militia, and by Wm. Cowper, who had won popularity by his action in expelling Farson Agnew from the Bennett's Creek Church. In the convention of 1788, which ratified the constitution of the United States, the county was represented by Willis Riddick and Solomon Shepherd.

After the burning of Norfolk in January, 1776, numbers of the houseless and distressed fugitives from that place fled to Suffolk. The people of Suffolk threw open their doors to them and every building was soon crowded with them. When Col. Howe, of the Virginia forces retired to Suffolk in February, bringing with him 650 men, the town was threatened with serious distress by a lack of provisions for her many guests, but the country folk came to their aid and all were at last cared for.

During the Revolution, whenever Chesapeake bay happened to be blockaded by the British, the only direct foreign trade of the colony was conducted by way of Albemarle sound and its tributaries. The depot of this trade was at South Quay, in the upper portion of Nansemond county. Government supplies came by this route. These supplies were then carried by wagon train to Suffolk. Several attempts were made by the British to capture or destroy these stores at Suffolk, but the vigilance of the Virginia troops, aided by the militia, prevented the British from advancing as far as Suffolk.

In 1779 Sir Henry Clinton determined to make an attack upon Virginia. He sent a powerful fleet, which anchored in Hampton Roads, landed a large force under Gen. Matthews, which took possession of Portsmouth and Norfolk, and committed extensive devastations in the surrounding country. It was on this expedition, May 13th, that Suffolk was burned.

As soon as the news of the arrival of the British in Hampton Roads was received, the militia of Nansemond were called to arms. Suffolk was appointed as the meeting place. Only 200 men responded to the call, and these were poorly armed. Few had muskets, and still fewer ammunition. These, however, they obtained from Capt. Bright, who commanded the letter-of-marque brig Mars, that was lying in the river. Bright also furnished two cannon, which were immediately mounted on cart wheels. This little army, under Col. Willis Riddick, marched about eight miles on the Norfolk road and went into camp on the 11th of May in the field in front of Capt. James Murdagh's house. Three young soldiers, Josiah Riddick, Thomas Granbury and Thomas Brittle, were sent on ahead to get information of the enemy's advance. They were

captured by the British just below Hall's Mill, in Norfolk county, and carried to New York, where they were prisoners for a year and a half. The militia under Col. Riddick, getting no news from the scouts, remained in ignorance of the approach of the British. Two officers, Captains King and Davis, went off to a tavern about a mile from camp to pass the night. While there, they were surprised by the enemy. Davis was killed, but King escaped and informed his comrades in camp of the enemy's proximity. Col. Willis Riddick was so confident that the enemy was still at a great



Chapel, Chuckatuck, Va.

distance that he had retired to his house for the night. The command developed upon Col. Edward Riddick, and he ordered a retreat to Suffolk. Next morning two officers were dispatched to learn the position and force of the enemy. They came in sight of the British four miles below Suffolk, and counted 600 infantry. The little force of militia had become demoralized during the night, and only 100 answered to the call to arms next morning. Resistance was useless, and every man was told to look out for himself. Some delayed long enough to gather their property together, only to be captured by the British; the rest escaped. The royal troops entered the town and set fire to the buildings. The court house,

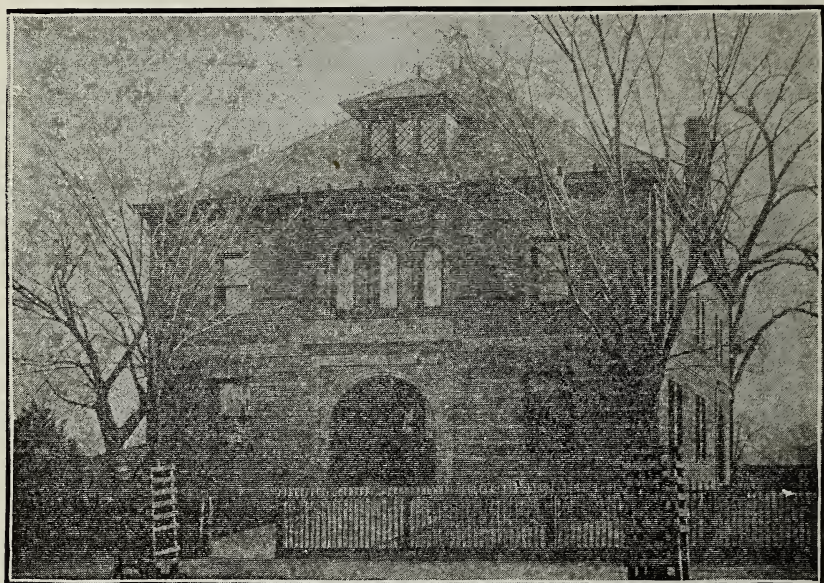
the clerk's office, with all the county records, and many other buildings were destroyed. The government stores were captured. Several hundred barrels of tar, pitch, turpentine and rum were on the wharves awaiting shipment. The heads of the barrels were knocked in and their contents poured into the river and then set on fire. The wind and tide carried the burning tar and pitch across the river to the wide marshes, and soon the sheet of fire extended for many miles.

During the next two years Nansemond had good cause to remember the British. Gen. Tarleton, returning from his famous raid and attempt to capture the legislature, joined the royal troops encamped at Suffolk. Some time during 1781 a detachment of British troops under Capt. Saunders came up from Portsmouth, crossed the river at Sleepy Hole and carried off horses and other property, and returned by way of Suffolk. Lord Cornwallis, having crossed the James from Williamsburg, marched through Nansemond, crossing the river by the Sleepy Hole ferry. Among the British troops who were at Suffolk during this year were the Queen's Rangers, of which troop Parson Agnew was chaplain, and in which his son, Stair Agnew, was a captain.

After the destruction of Suffolk by the British an act of assembly authorizes the justices of the county to hold court "at such convenient place as they shall appoint" until a new court house could be erected. Tradition points to a spot adjoining the parish church yard in Chuckatuck as the ancient site of a county clerk's office. As the British were in possession of the region around Suffolk for two years, it may be that the court house and clerk's office were moved to Chuckatuck during that period.

In 1778 David Barrow, pastor of the Mill Swamp Baptist church in Isle of Wight, and Mr. Mintz, another Baptist, preached by invitation at the house of a gentleman who lived on Nansemond River in Lower Parish. A platform was erected and a crowd assembled. After the expulsion of Agnew, the parish church remained vacant, though the vestry had advertised for a minister. With the exception of the gatherings at the two Quaker meeting houses, the parish, for three years, had had no preacher in their preaching of the two Baptists stirred up some ill-feeling, and a midst, tho' the clerk still read the services in the church. The crowd of about twenty men determined to break up the meeting. They jeered and sung songs, and finally captured Barrow and Mintz and carried them to the river and ducked them. Barrow was the chief sufferer, as they thrust his face down into the mud of the river. Mintz, who had given less occasion for ill feeling,

was let off more easily. The affair was evidently the outcome of the reckless mood of a crowd of young rowdies, who resented the preacher's criticism of them. Only the fevered imagination of a pious chronicler could make it appear as a part of a systematic persecution by the established church. The first Baptist church in the county was Western Branch church. It was at first but a mission of the Mill Swamp church. The date of its founding is uncertain. In 1787, nine years after his unpleasant experience in Nansemond River, Mintz returned to the scene of his former labors and or-



County Clerk's Office, Suffolk, Va.

ganized Shoulder's Hill church. The sentiment of the community had condemned the act of rowdyism and Mr. Mintz met with much encouragement. A strong church was soon established. The church building was finally sold and another built at Sycamore Hill, in Norfolk county.

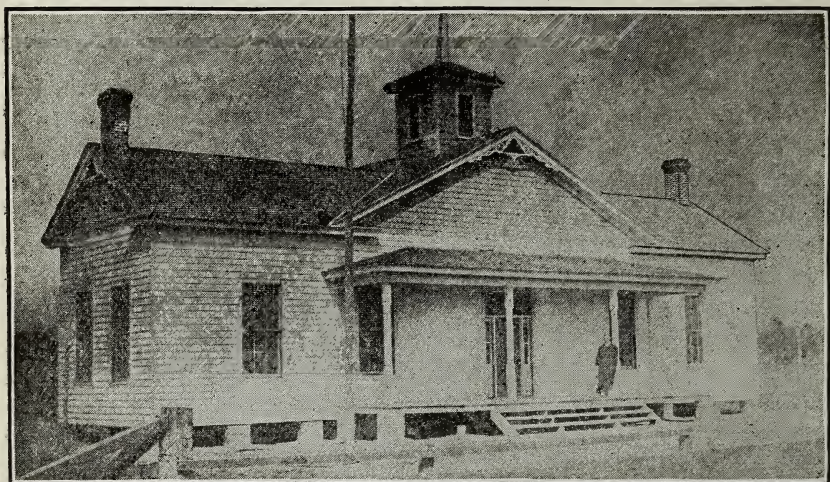
In 1779 Asbury, the great leader of Methodism in Virginia, labored in Nansemond. He was accorded a warm welcome. In his diary for 1779 Asbury mentions that he preached in "the great preaching house at Nansemond." This preaching house had been converted from a store into a church. The established church was sadly crippled by the Revolution. A few of its ministers had remained loyal to the British government; others were forced into secular pursuits in order to live; some entered the American army.

Of the ninety clergymen in Virginia when the Revolution began hardly more than twenty were in charge of parishes when the war closed. The Church of England shared the hatred heaped upon all things English in name or character. The vestry who had been the twelve great men of the parish and had excited the envy of the less fortunate, became also objects of open dislike. The vestry levied the tithes, and the agitation against the church had its economic as well as social, religious and political significance. Every force in the colony was against the church and even those who loved her felt that the times were hopelessly against her. The church in many counties became extinct. In Nansemond the church still held to the parish churches at Bennett's Creek, Chuckatuck and at Suffolk. The church in Suffolk seems to have been badly injured during the period of the British occupation. An effort to raise funds by subscription for repairs in 1791 failed, and the church gradually fell to pieces. It was pulled down in 1820 and the bricks sold. The church at Bennett's Creek was in a dilapidated condition as early as 1812, but was remodeled and repaired in 1854. The chapels in Upper Parish passed out of the possession of the church after the Revolution. The people in the neighborhood of these churches being without a minister, offered the buildings to the Methodist preachers, who were very active in missionary work. Cypress chapel became a Methodist church. This church was in the circuit of the Rev. James O'Kelly, an eloquent and zealous Methodist preacher. In 1793 O'Kelly, with several other ministers, seceded from the Methodist church and organized the Republican Methodists. His Cypress chapel congregation went with him. In 1801 the name of the new church was changed to the Christian church. Holy Neck chapel has a similar history. Some time about 1800 a meeting-house was built in Suffolk by popular subscription. This meeting-house stood on the present site of the cemetery. It was free to all who desired to use it. Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians and O'Kellyites all held services there.

By an act of legislature all glebe lands belonging to the established church, except those lands which had been a private donation, were ordered to be sold and the proceeds turned over to the overseers of the poor. The glebe in Upper Parish passed from the hands of the church, but when the overseers of the poor claimed the glebe in Suffolk Parish, Parson Jacob Keeling fought the case in the court, proved the fact that it had been a private gift and won his case. The valuable Glebe farm is still held by the trustees of the Episcopal church in this parish.

The county passed through a long period of agricultural de-

pression from 1820 to 1835. The population was almost at a standstill during these years. The chief industries of the county were the manufacture of tar, turpentine and staves. The Dismal Swamp was the largest source of revenue. In 1835 three million shingles were brought down the canals. It was about 1835 that the farmers began to utilize the marl that is so widely distributed. An immediate improvement was manifested. Indian corn remained for a long time the staple product. The county furnished its quota of soldiers in the war of 1812 and some of its citizens fought in Mexico, but during the period from 1835 to 1860



Public School Building, Whaleyville, Va.

the county enjoyed a normal development in the midst of uneventful times.

Looking back upon those days the words, "Blessed is the land that has no history," seem something more than a jest, for the days when history was being made within her boundaries have ever been days of suffering and distress to our citizens. During the time of peace and quiet the county still took an interest in military affairs. The militia was well organized. The Nansemond militia composed the 59th Regiment. In 1844 Col. Hugh H. Kelly was Col. Comd't, and Wiley Parker, Jr., R. R. Smith, E. D. B. Howell, Nathaniel E. Pruden, John Oberry and Edmund Riddick captains of light infantry. Nansemond also had a company of light artillery and one or more companies of cavalry. The Nansemond cavalry was commanded in 1849 by Capt. B. D. Smith. In that year Capt. Smith petitioned the legislature for new arms for his command.

This petition was granted, and when this company entered the service of the Confederacy and became Company I of the 13th Va. Cavalry they carried into service the old flint and steel pistols granted to the company in 1849.

Muster day was a great day in the county, but, unfortunately, there was no chronicler of the doings on the muster-ground. Only dim legends survive of the revels and combats of the green where many a political aspiration first voiced its desire, and where the acknowledged victor of many a neighborhood fight thirsted for new glory as champion of the county. The muster-ground was situated about three miles southwest of Suffolk. The event that stands out during this period was the great fire that, in 1837, nearly destroyed the town of Suffolk. The court house and jail were burned, but the newly erected clerk's office escaped. About 130 houses were burned. In 1849 the first newspaper in the county was published. This paper was the Suffolk Intelligencer. Its editor was John R. Kilby, and it was Whig in politics.

Among the legends of the county are stories of runaway slaves who had fled to Dismal Swamp, and lived there for many years in a state of almost complete savagery. In the Virginia convention which passed the ordinance of secession, the county was represented by John R. Kilby. Virginia's call to her sons to come to the defense of her honor met with a quick and hearty response in Nansemond. Nine companies entered the Confederate service from the county.

Prior to the evacuation of Norfolk, May 10th, 1862, Suffolk was occupied by the Confederate troops. After the fall of Norfolk the Confederates withdrew to the other side of Blackwater River. On May 12th, 1862, Col. Dodge's N. Y. Cavalry rode into Suffolk and took possession. A large force of Federals soon arrived and encamped in the neighborhood of the town. In September Gen. Peck assumed command of the Federals and, fearing an attack from the Confederates, who were massing troops beyond the Blackwater, commenced to throw up entrenchments. Every preparation was made for a prolonged siege. In his official report Peck states that "ten miles of batteries, covered ways and rifle-pits have been thrown up. Most of the artillery is protected by embrasures; the parapets are from 12 to 15 feet in thickness, while the covered ways are from 8 to 10 feet." Several gun-boats arrived and lay in the Nansemond to assist in the defense of the Federal position. About 17,000 troops were in Peck's command. On Nov. 14th, 1862, there was a skirmish at Providence church between a party of 300 Con-

federates under Col. Claiborne and the N. Y. Mounted Rifles. The Confederates were forced to retire to Blackwater.

In the spring of 1863 Gen'l Longstreet, then in command of the forces at Petersburg, crossed the Blackwater River with the double purpose of obtaining forage and provisions from Nansemond, Isle of Wight, and adjacent portions of North Carolina, and of making a demonstration against Suffolk with a view of preventing the forces there from joining Gen. Hooker's army, which Gen. Lee was trying to draw into battle. On April 11th, 1863, Longstreet advanced upon Suffolk. There was a skirmish on South Quay Road and the Federal pickets were driven back. Next day there were skirmishes on the Edenton, Providence Church and Somerton roads. The Confederates pushed on to the north bank of the Nansemond, and planted a battery near the Norfleet house, a few miles below Suffolk. The battery at Norfleet's opened fire on the gun-boats; and disabled the Monmouth Washington and the West-End. They drifted on the flats but were towed off by the Stepping Stones, and fell down the river. Another Confederate battery was planted at Hill's Pt. at the mouth of Western Branch.

On April 19th Lieutenant Lamson of the Federal navy suggested and successfully executed a plan for taking Huger's Battery at Hills Pt. by surprise. A storming party of 500 landed and attacked the fort in the rear. The Confederate infantry in the neighborhood, under command of Gen. French, had failed to establish a picket line, and Capt. Stribling, who was in command of Huger's Battery, was ignorant of the approach of the storming party until they were close on the fortifications. The battery had been hastily constructed at night, and the guns faced the river and could not be turned inland. The battery was captured and 125 made prisoners. On April 23rd there was a skirmish at Chuckatuck. Next day the Federals made two attacks on the Confederate picket lines south of Suffolk and there was brisk fighting for a time, but the casualties were slight. On May 3rd Longstreet began to withdraw his forces and retire to his old lines beyond Blackwater, and the siege of Suffolk was over. There was skirmishing that day near Hills Pt., at Reid's Ferry and Chuckatuck, but they were all small affairs. The main purpose of Longstreet's move had been accomplished, though his correspondence with Gen. Lee and the Secretary of War make plain that he was very anxious to make an attack on Suffolk. The presence of the gun-boats in the Nansemond made it impossible to flank the enemy, and Longstreet persistently urged the Confederate authorities to send the Confederate gun-boat Richmond down the James to Nanse-

mond River. The obstructions in the James prevented the sending of the Richmnod, and Longstreet wrote to Lee that while he thought that he could certainly take the works at Suffolk by assault that it would probably be at the cost of 3,000 men, and that the game was not worth the candle. In this opinion Gen. Lee concurred, adding: "If you were to capture Suffolk, I could not spare men to garrison it."

One event of the siege of Suffolk was so tragic that in the memory of old inhabitants it still stands out as of peculiar sadness, even in the midst of the anguish of those terrible days of civil war. This incident was the death of Mrs. Geo. R. Smith, the wife of a prominent citizen, whose home was about a mile from Suffolk.

On April 13th the Federal pickets on the Somerton road were driven in by a force of Confederate infantry and cavalry. Longstreet's artillery then opened on the Federals, and immediately the guns from Fort Union, Fort Nansemond, and Fort McClellan responded. The Federal shells riddled the residence of Mr. Smith, and he and his family were forced to seek shelter in the cellar of an outhouse. The Federals sent out a party of skirmishers under Col. Foster. They posted sharpshooters in a small house some distance from the main dwelling, and established a line of pickets along the lanes in the front and rear of the house. Col. Magruder ordered a force of Confederates to dislodge the sharpshooters. They were driven out and the Federal picket line forced back to the woods in the rear of the dwelling. The fighting was all around the house in which the Smith family had taken refuge; and they thought it best to seek shelter in the woods. They had almost reached the woods when Mrs. Smith was struck by a bullet and bled to death before medical aid could be obtained. So active was the skirmishing for the next few days that the four little children, one of them an infant, were compelled to remain in the woods from Monday until Thursday. It was impossible to determine whether the party was fired on by the Federals, or whether the fatal shot came from the advancing Confederates.

During the Federal occupation of Suffolk the civil government of the county was practically suspended. The first session of the County Court was held in South Quay church on February 8th, 1864. It was not until August, 1865, that the court again held its sessions at the court house in Suffolk. During the war the county clerk, Mr. Peter Prentis, was arrested by the Federal authorities and imprisoned at Point Lookout. Fearing lest the county records might be destroyed, they were carried to Norfolk

and deposited in the Customs House. The records were returned to Suffolk at the close of the war. On the night of February 7th, 1866, the clerk's office caught fire and was totally destroyed. For the third time in the history of the country the official records were burned. The loss of these records has made the task of the historian a hard one, and explains the fragmentary character of the history of a community that played an important role in the early days of the colony and state. Nansemond deserves a fitter tribute than the broken narrative compiled from a hundred different sources.

The county was in possession of the Federals for nearly three years, and her resources were exhausted by the support of an immense army of her foe quartered in her midst.

The meat of the peanut-fed hog is highly prized in all markets. South, only the quiet of desolation. Gradually, however, there was evidence of a renewed life, and for many years now the county has been exceedingly prosperous. With the development of her agricultural resources has come the enhanced value of farming lands, the building of comfortable farm houses and the improvement of stock. This prosperity of the farmers has aided in large measure in the upbuilding of the town of Suffolk.

Suffolk is a progressive town of 7,000 inhabitants. Six railroads enter the town, and it is the terminus of the Suffolk & Carolina Ry. Suffolk is at the head of navigation of Nansemond River, and ships drawing fourteen feet of water can enter its port. It has varied and very extensive factories and manufacturing plants. Suffolk is the largest peanut market in the world. Seven large factories for the cleaning and shelling of peanuts have an annual output of more than three million dollars. It has three banking establishments. One of these banks has the peculiar distinction of ranking first in the list of state banks in the United States in respect to the relation of capital and surplus.

Nansemond county is 35 long and 19 miles wide, extending from Hampton Roads on the north to the North Carolina line on the south, and contains 393 square miles. There is striking variety of soil within the county, the heavy black soil of the reclaimed lands along the swamp, the wide stretch of sandy loam with clay subsoil that responds readily to fertilization and the rich alluvial lands along the river. Corn, cotton and peanuts are widely and successfully cultivated. The lower portion of the county is largely devoted to truck farming. Vast quantities of potatoes, cabbage, kale, peas, beans, beets, squashes, cucumbers, spinach, melons and berries are raised here. The upper portion of the county is the ideal soil for peanuts, which is a sure and exceedingly profitable

crop. The vines of the peanut afford forage for the cattle, and the nuts that remain in the earth when the crop is dug afford the best possible food for the numbers of hogs that are raised. The merit of the peanut-fed hog is highly prized in all markets. The peanut itself commands a good price and its cultivation has largely increased the wealth of the community. The average price for improved land is \$25 an acre, but there are still large tracts that can be bought for less that need only the expenditure of small capital and slight labor to transform them from profitless old fields to smiling gardens.

An increasing industry in the county is the utilization of the vast clay beds for the manufacture of brick. This clay is of the finest quality and is widely distributed. It varies in color from red to blue. The depth ranges from four to twenty feet and is excellent material for the manufacture of red or gray building brick, tiles, terra cotta, and pressed brick. There are large deposits all over the county, mostly underlaid with sand and with marl beneath this.

The county has within her bounds a source of wealth as yet unutilized. Inexhaustible deposits of marl are scattered widely. With the increasing demand for cement in building, this marl will some day find a discoverer. A large cement concern has already bought an extensive marl deposit near Chuckatuck.

The Nansemond River, besides affording to the county a speedy and cheap means of transportation, adds to the wealth of its citizens by the fish and oyster industries. The Nansemond River oyster compares favorably with the best products of the tributaries of the Chesapeake, and the growing demand for these oysters is indication of the public's recognition of the fact.



FROM U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

THE DISMAL SWAMP.

When Col. Wm. Byrd, in 1728, gave to the great morass that stretches for fifteen miles through Virginia and twenty-five miles into North Carolina the name of Dismal Swamp, he did a lasting injury to this whole section of country.

Viewed from the standpoint of an engineer whose duty it was to run a line through the whole width of its vast area, it did, no doubt, present a dismal prospect, but to the traveler or explorer of today the swamp is a place of unsurpassed beauty and of never ending variety of interest and charm; while to the lumberman and agriculturist it furnishes a field of profitable investment that has as yet been but dimly appreciated. The statements contained in this narrative in regard to the Dismal Swamp are based upon the reports of scientific experts employed by the U. S. Government to conduct the investigations, and their published reports read like the stories of men returned from a visit to fairy-land. The isothermal line showing where northern climate ends and southern begins, with the extremes in temperature of neither, runs through Nansemond Co. skirting the swamp. The variety of flowers is therefore very great and the whole swamp in the springtime presents the appearance of a vast conservatory of rare and beautiful plants. About sixty-five thousand acres of Dismal Swamp are in the county of Nansemond. Two canals within the county, Jericho and Washington, pierce the swamp and meet at Lake Drummond. The canals were dug by the Dismal Swamp Land Co. more than a century ago, and cargoes of juniper and cypress have been freighted through these channels during that long period. In the center of the swamp is a lake almost circular in shape and about three miles is diameter. Lake Drummond, as it is called, derives its name from a daring hunter who, with three companions, ventured, in the early days, into the recesses of the great unknown morass. His companions lost their way and perished, and Drummond alone returned to tell the tale of the beautiful lake that lay hid away in the forest of juniper and cypress. The origin of this lake is itself a matter of curious interest. Its surface is twenty-two feet higher than the margins of the swamp. In fact, the lake is the most elevated spot in the swamp. Scientists tell us that the vast deposits of vegetable matter around its edges have left this land-locked sheet of water a crowd of beauty that holds the admiring eye of every one who has ever seen it. It is no idle dream that pictures the time when the site of the Dismal Swamp will be the garden of the eastern portion of America. During the time of the Saxon kings England was to a great extent occupied



FROM U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

by bogs, which have since been cleared away. The sites of these bogs are now identified by the great and persistent fertility of the soil. Probably not far from one-twentieth of the tillable land in Europe was once inundated and unfit for agriculture.

Already the work of reclaiming the swamp has been begun. In its original condition, before this region had been affected by tillage, the area of inundated lands was much larger than at present. One-third of the swamp has already been reclaimed. On the outskirts of the swamp are occasional ridges that are covered with a growth of pine. The lower levels are mainly occupied by three species of trees which are tolerant of water about their roots. The juniper occupies areas which are commonly somewhat dry during the summer season. The gum and cypress can inhabit areas which are in most cases water covered, even during the growing season. The cypress is the most tolerant of water of these species, often attaining its best development in places where summer droughts at no time remove water far from the surface of their roots. Both gum and cypress have provisions by which the roots are enabled to have access to air and thus secure the aeration required by the processes which take place in their underground branches. It is an interesting fact that the knees of the cypress develop only where the roots on which they rest lie beneath the surface of the water during the growing season of the year. The gum's roots similarly arch near the bole till they get air. These protruding arches are generally covered with a growth of annual plants. Where the arch is small the tree is stunted. The growth of the cypress presents many strange and grotesque appearances. The body of the cypress is twice and sometimes three times as large at its base as it is ten feet from the ground.

The character of the soil is determined by the nature of the growth thereon. Light swamp land is soil where juniper has grown. It is nearly pure peat, consisting of a brown mass of vegetable matter derived from juniper or white cedar. The thickness of the deposit is often eight to ten feet. Seventy-five to ninety-five per cent of the soil is organic matter. Such land cleared and drained is practically worthless for agricultural purposes, for the peat cakes and hardens so that it resembles charred wood. Nearly one-third of the swamp is light. Nature has thus provided that the swamp shall never be wholly denuded. The juniper districts must ever remain a nursery for timber trees. Juniper, unlike cypress, reproduces rapidly, so that from some tracts in the swamp three cuttings of merchantable lumber have been made in twenty years; the wood increasing one inch per year. Dark swamp land is soil which has borne a forest of cypress, black gum and red maple. This soil is immeas-



ureably rich in agricultural possibilities. It contains a large amount of organic matter in its upper portion, but when properly drained the amount of organic matter gradually diminishes. The soil after fifty years of cultivation still remains black in color. The tendency in some of this land to get acid at times is readily obviated by the use of lime. This reclaimed land is very fertile. Eighty to one hundred bushels of corn to the acre can be raised in this soil, even when it is first redeemed. Potatoes are grown, not only on the light soils near the coast, but on a large scale in the heavier soils along the eastern border of the swamp, where the average yield is said to be eighty barrels to the acre. The cultivation of celery on these rich black-gum lands reclaimed from the swamp has recently begun, and the product is equal in quality to the best Michigan celery.

It is calculated that already enough labor has been expended to have drained the whole area of the swamp, but it was conducted by individual farmers, without the help of engineers, and with no idea of general improvement. In reclaiming a few acres they have inundated many more. The greatest elevation of the swamp is near its central portion. The average inclination of the surface is twenty inches to the mile, and this is sufficient to give a strong current of water flowing in ditches having a width on the surface of four feet and a total depth of three feet. The character of the soil is favorable to such improvements. The considerable amount of vegetation causes these ditches to maintain their banks in good order. Large areas on either side of Jericho canal in Nansemond Co. could be made at once sufficiently dry for agricultural purposes.

Recent improvements in methods of excavation make it possible to unwater the land at a relatively small cost compared with older methods of hand labor.

In the average present condition of the forest portions of the swamp the return in the way of timber may amount to \$60 an acre, which probably would meet the expenses of clearing the forest away and of providing the smaller drainage canals. The area which would be won to tillage by such a system, though only a portion of this swamp district, is about 250 square miles, or 160,000 acres. The money value of this area thus improved is not less than \$16,000,000. This redeemed land is admirably adapted to truck farming. The annual demand for such truck is sure to increase apace, and there is not other field so well suited for the enlargement of this form of agriculture as the area occupied by the morass of the Dismal Swamp. The drainage canals could readily afford water transportation to within a mile of every part of the tilled area. Nowhere else in the world is there near to great markets so large a field of land suited

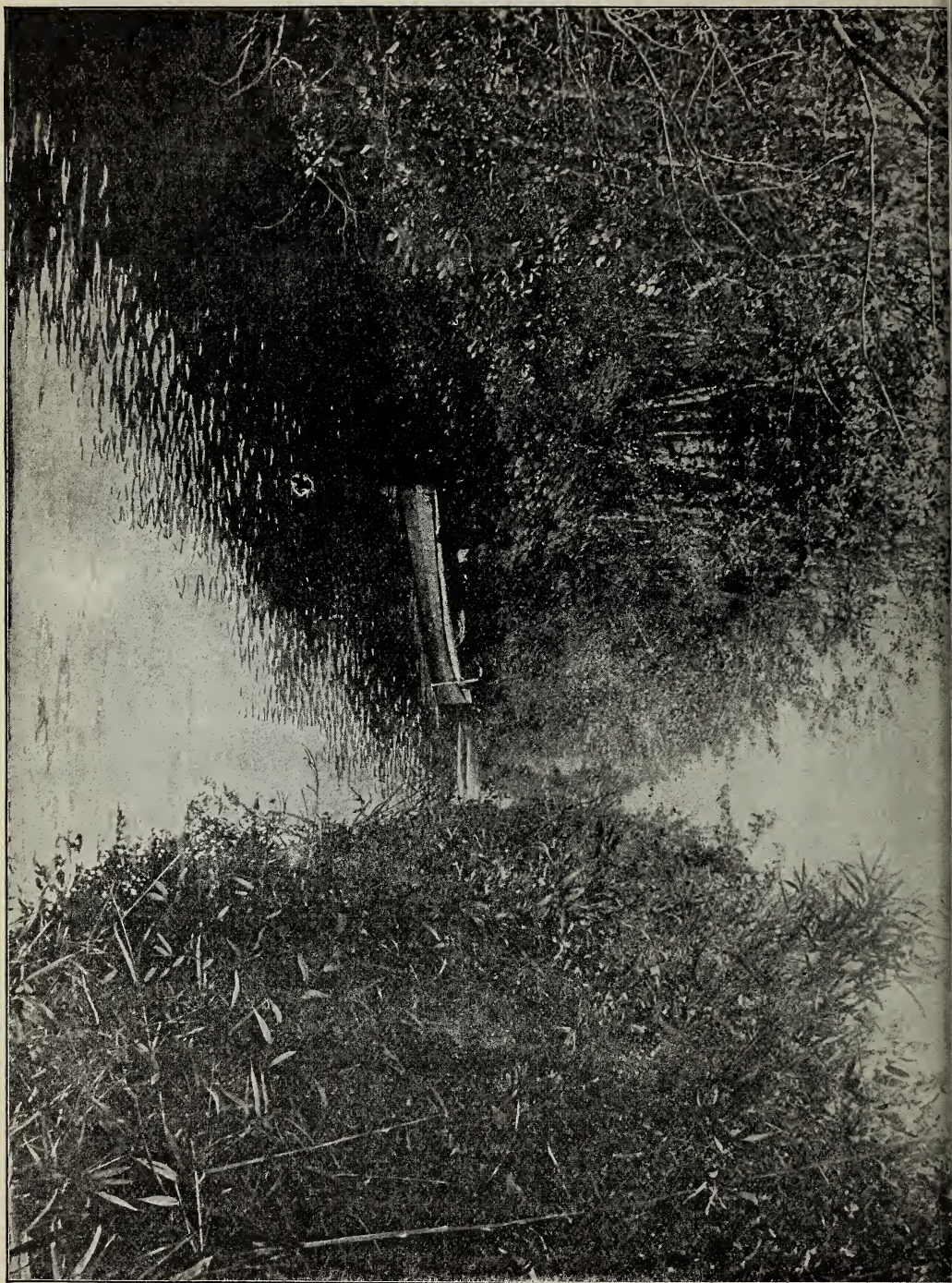


FROM THE U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

to garden crops which is not used for such purposes. If availed of for this form of tillage the annual return from the land would probably be not less than \$100 per acre or a total of \$16,000,000. It is thus evident that we have in this region a combination of the advantages of high-grade tillage, an excellent soil, ready water communication, a favorable climate, and opportunities for obtaining abundant irrigation waters in time of drought.

It is common opinion that all swamp districts are necessarily afflicted with malarial diseases. This opinion rests upon the experience which is had in the ordinary alluvial lands along the shores of rivers. The fact is that in hot climates where the level of the soil water varies much at different seasons of the year malarial effluvium is bred. On the other hand, where the soil, however wet, retains its moisture during the summer seasons at about the same height it holds during the winter, there is no peculiar liability to malaria. A certain amount of malaria occurs in the margins of the swamp, but in the swamp itself there is an almost total exemption from malaria. The decay of peaty matter alone does not afford the conditions which lead to the development of malarious exhalations. The drainage of the swamp might lead, for a short time, to some developmnet of malaria, but we may judge from our experience in the drainage work already done about the swamp that these fevers, if they occurred, would be of a simple and non-malignant type. The difficulty encountered from such diseases would probably be no greater than that which was for a time experienced in the settlements in Southern Indiana and Illinois.

Not the least of the riches of this region is the character of the water which inundates the swamp. It is commonly called juniper water, though its amber color is more probably due to the presence of finely divided vegetable matter, principally the product of the gum tree. This water is absolutely wholesome, and its keeping properties are proverbial. Vessels sailing out of Norfolk bound for a long cruise fill their barrels with it in preference to all other water, and it retains its wholesome characteristics for an indefinite period. The waters of Lake Drummond are so highly esteemed that people whose health is impaired frequently go there to drink of its waters and bring it home with them in casks. Jericho canal is ten miles long. It extends from Lake Drummond to a point two miles east of Suffolk. Washington canal is five miles long and runs at right angles to Jericho canal. In the spring and early summer the trip through the Washington canal furnishes a rare experience to the lover of the beautiful. The overhanging gum, cypress and red maple meet and intertwine overhead, shutting out

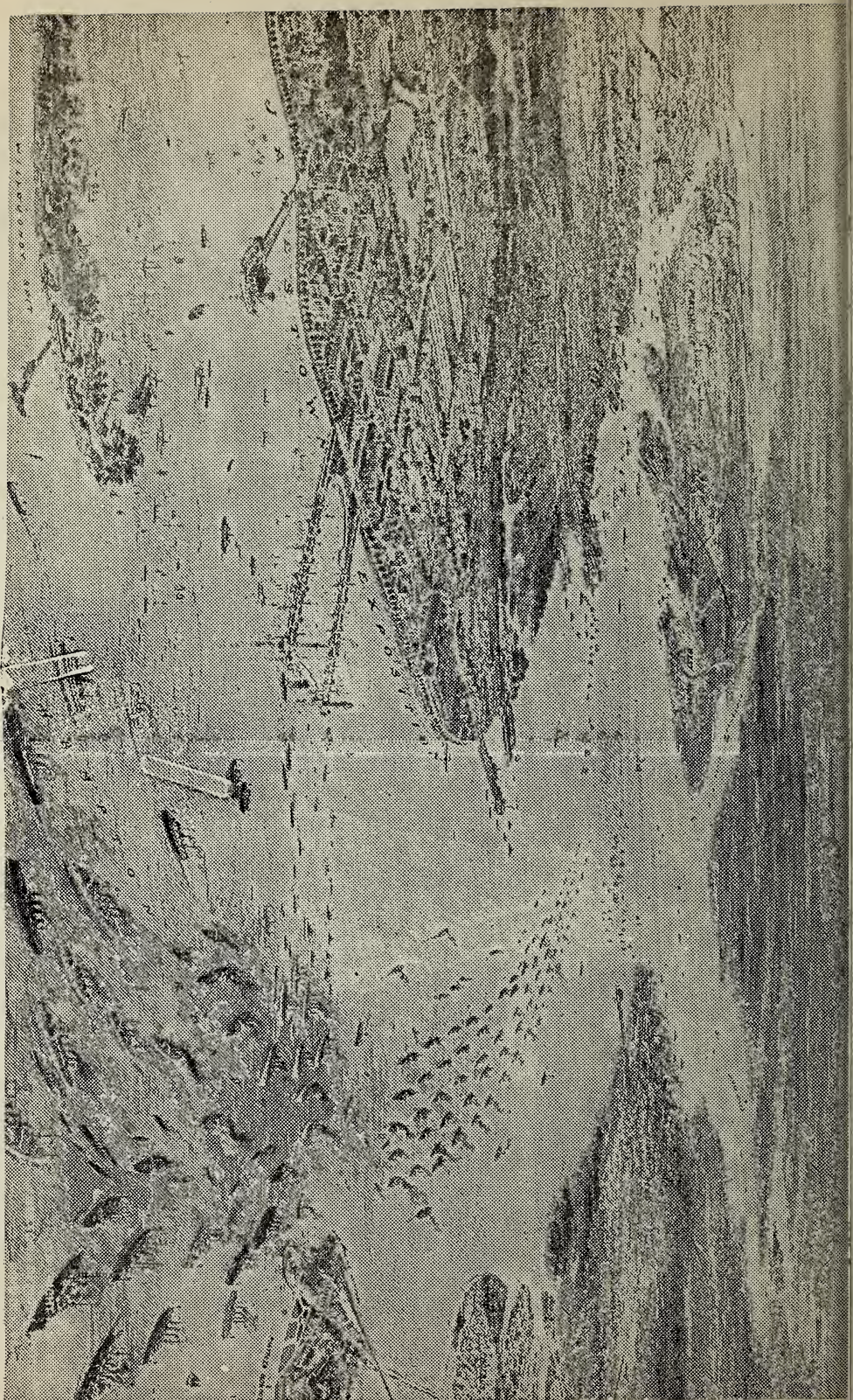


FROM U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

the glare of the sun. The strange bald knees of the cypress rear themselves about the huge body of the parent tree, and the lifted arches of the gum, covered with hardy annual flowers, give infinite variety of color. Every stump left by the woodsman's axe has been taken possession of by wild ivy or eglantine. The ferns wave along the banks, high as a man's head, and every passing breeze quickens into life the whispering reeds.

The Dismal Swamp is the greatest game preserve on the Atlantic seaboard. Bears abound, and it is calculated that at least two hundred are killed yearly. Deer are plentiful. Wild cattle, as fleet and as wary as the deer, make their home on the ridges that run through the swamp. Otters, minks and coons are very numerous, while on the margins of the swamp wood-cock abound as nowhere else in this portion of the world.

BIRDS EYE VIEW JAMESTOWN EXPOSITION AND SURROUNDING TERRITORY



CLERKS OF NANESEMOND COUNTY COURT.

John Leer.....1675	Joseph Prentis.....1838-1851
Joseph Bridger.....1699	Benjamin Riddick....1851-1852
Daniel Sullivan.....1702-1703	Peter B. Prentis.....1852-1869
Michael Archer1714	E. F. Williamson....1869-1871
Christopher Jackson..1734-1749	Willis E. Cohoon....1871-1875
John Wright.....1749-1751	Peter B. Prentis.....1875-1888
Lemuel Riddick.....1751-1775	Wm. B. Causey.....1888-1890
*John C. Littlepage..1777-1830	Robert. R. Smith....1890
John T. Kilby.....1830-1838	

*During the latter portion of his term of office Littlepage did not for many years reside in or even visit the county. He resided in Hanover and was kept within the bounds of that county by his creditors, he having refused to take advantage of the poor-debtor's law. His work was done by a deputy, John T. Kilby, who succeeded to the office.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES FROM NANSEMOND CO.

UPPER NORFOLK.

1639.

Randall Crew. John Gookin. Tristram Norseworthy.

1641.

Capt. Daniel Coogan (Gookin). John Carter.

1642.

Thomas Dewe.

1643.

John Carter. Randall Crew.

1644.

Randall Crew. Moore Fauntleroy.

1644-5.

Philip Bennett. Moore Fauntleroy.

1645.

Philip Bennett. Edward Major. Richard Wells.

NANSEMOND.

1647.

Moore Fauntleroy. Sam Stoughton. Richard Wells.

1649.

John Carter. Toby Smith.

1652 (April).

Capt. Thomas Dew. Edward Major (Speaker).

1652 (November).

Col. Thomas Dew (Speaker). Peter Montague.

1653.

Col. Thos. Dew. Lieu. Col. Edward Major. Peter Montague.

1654.

Col. Thos. Dew. Sam Stoughton. Thos. Goodwin.

1655-6.

Capt. Ed. Streeter. John Willcox. Capt. Blake.

UPPER NORFOLK (Sic.)

1657-8.

Lieu. Col. Edward Carter. Thomas Francis. Giles Webb.
UPPER NORFOLK (Sic.)

1658.

Lieu. Col. Edward Carter. Capt. Thomas Goodwyn (Sic.)
Giles Webb.
UPPER NORFOLK (Sic.)

1659-60.

Giles Webb. Wm. Denson. George Catchmaie.

1663.

George Wallings.

1666.

Capt. John Blake. Capt. John Leare.

1685.

John Brasseur. Thomas Lear.

1688.

Thomas Milner. Thomas Lear.

1692.

Lieu. Col. Thomas Milner (Speaker). Thomas Lear.

1696.

John Brasseur. Thomas Jordan.

1702.

Thomas Milner. Daniel Sullivan.

1714.

Thos. Godwin. Wm. Wright.

1718.

John Lear. James Riddick.

1720-2.

John Lear. James Reddick.

1723.

Thomas Godwin. Henry Baker.

1726.

Thomas Godwin. Henry Baker.

1736.

Daniel Pugh. Lemuel Riddick.

1738.

Daniel Pugh. Lemuel Riddick.

1740.

Daniel Pugh. Lemuel Riddick.

1742.

Lemuel Riddick. — Baker.

1744.

Lemuel Riddick. — Baker.

1745.

Lemuel Riddick. — Baker.

1746.

Lemuel Riddick. — Baker.

1747.

Lemuel Riddick. — Baker.

1748.

Lemuel Riddick. Wm. Hunter.

1749.

Lemuel Riddick. Wm. Hunter.

1752.

Lemuel Riddick. Anthony Holladay.

1753.

Lemuel Riddick. Anthony Holladay.

1754 (Febr'y.)

Lemuel Riddick. Anthony Holladay.

1754 (Aug.)

Lemuel Riddick. Anthony Holladay.

1754 (Oct.)

Lemuel Riddick. Anthony Holladay.

1755.

Lemuel Riddick. Anthony Holladay.

1756.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1757.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1758.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1758-61.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1759 (Febr'y.)

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1759 (Nov.)

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1760-61.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1761.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1762 (Jan'y.)

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1762 (Mrach.)

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1762 (Nov.)

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1763.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1764 (Jan'y).

Willis Riddick. Lemuel Riddick.

1764 (Oct.).

Willis Riddick. Lemuel Riddick.

1765 (May).

Willis Riddick. Lemuel Riddick.

1765 (Oct.).

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1766-8.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1769.

David Meade. Willis Riddick.

1770.

Lemuel Riddick. Benjamin Baker.

1171.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

1772-4.

Benjamin Baker. Lemuel Riddick.

1773.

Benjamin Baker. Lemuel Riddick.

1774.

Benjamin Baker. Lemuel Riddick.

1775.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

CONVENTIONS OF 1775-6.

March 20th, 1775.

Lemuel Riddick. Willis Riddick.

July 17th, 1775.

Andrew Meade. James Murdagh.

Dec. 1st, 1775.

James Murdagh. Andrew Meade.

May 6th, 1776.

Willis Riddick. Wm. Cowper.

**SPEAKERS OF THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES FROM
NANSEMOND COUNTY.**

Edward Major.....April, 1652

Thomas Dew.....Nov., 1652

Thomas GodwinJune, 1676

Thomas Milner..... 1691-93

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL.

Richard Bennett.....1639

William Bernard.....1641

Thomas Dew.....1655

John Carter.....1657-8

Edmund Carter1659

John Lear.....

GOVERNOR.

Richard Bennett1652-55

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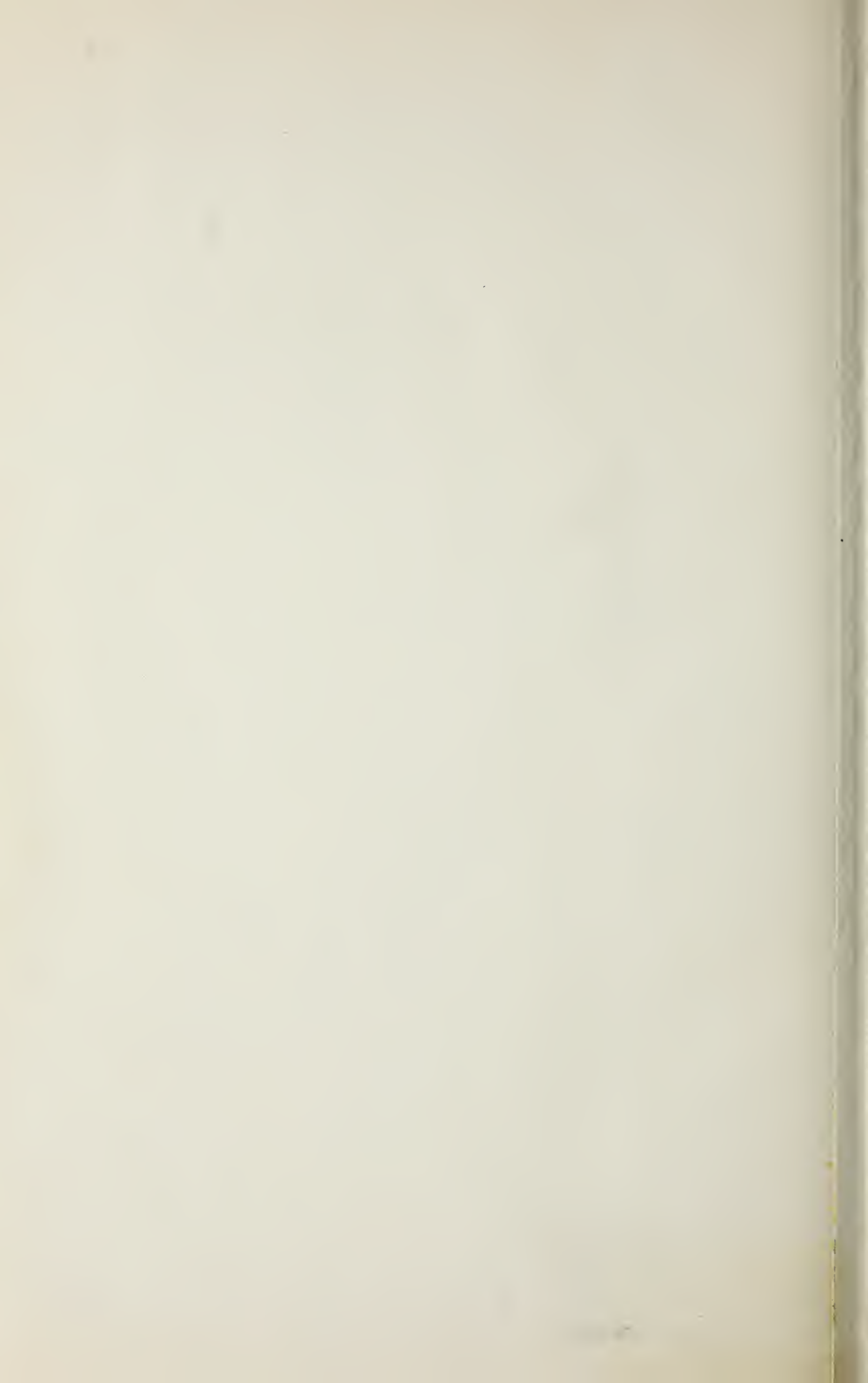
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